

# A VISION AND A DREAM

*An Informal History  
of the  
Christchurch Branch  
of National Council of Women  
N.Z. Inc.*



SHONA MANN NANCY RIDLEY



Front Cover:

Detail of cartoon reproduced from *The Spectator* April 1898

The profile portrait is *Mrs E. B. Taylor*.



# **A Vision and a Dream**

A History of the Christchurch Branch of the National  
Council of Women  
1918–1993



Christchurch Branch of the National Council of Women 1993

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# *Introduction*

1993 will be remembered as the Year for Women, the year when women made a conscious effort to share social, spiritual, educational and employment initiatives in celebration of their gaining the right to vote one hundred years ago, in 1893.

The remarkable qualities and charisma of the early leaders who persisted with their aim of attaining social justice and economic freedom for women were the beginnings for women of like minds to continue to address issues of concern. The strength of women's participation in social reform is noteworthy and well worth encouraging.

The last history of the Branch was written at the time of the Canterbury Centennial in 1950 by two great stalwarts of the Canterbury Branch, Miss Minnie Havelaar and Miss Hilda Lovell-Smith. The Women's Suffrage celebrations have given us the opportunity to look back over those years and the following forty three. Shona Mann and Nancy Ridley have given us a most readable record of the Christchurch N.C.W. Branch activities to date.

Let us pray the next one hundred years of N.C.W. records will be respected as our country moves into the next century from office government to global government control—archival material will indeed be very precious for the use of following generations.

**Ruby Selby**

**President, 1990–1993**



# *Acknowledgements*

Our first thanks must go to the President and the committee. Their willingness to ask us to write the history of the Branch has provided us with the opportunity to undertake a most exciting venture.

In tasks such as this one receives assistance from so many people it is impossible to name each individually. We do, however, owe special debts of gratitude to the Immediate Past President, Ruby Selby, who first approached us to write the book and who assisted us throughout the work, and Sadie Lilly, the secretary for over 20 years, who made her personal records available to us. We would like to thank all the past presidents and members who were so generous in helping us with the work.

Thanks are due to the librarians of the Macmillan Brown Library of the Canterbury University Library, the New Zealand Section of the Canterbury Public Library and the Canterbury Museum Library. We thank, too, The Press and the Christchurch Star for the use of their papers and records.

Finally we would like to thank Erin McGifford and all who helped provide illustrations for this book, and Mary Kinnaird who typed the manuscript. Every effort has been made to trace holders of copyright, but where this has proved impossible, we hope an apology and this general acknowledgement will be accepted.

**Shona Mann**

**Nancy Ridley**

Shona Mann and Nancy Ridley were asked by the Christchurch Branch of the National Council of Women to write the Branch history to celebrate the passing of the Women's Suffrage Bill in 1883. Both hold degrees from the University of New Zealand, both have been delegates to the Christchurch Branch in the past representing their organisation—the Canterbury Branch of the Federation of University Women. Both have now retired and are living in Christchurch. Always interested in local history, Shona Mann edited the two books published by the Canterbury Branch of the F.U.W.—*Sydenham, the Model Borough of Old Christchurch*, and *The History of St Albans, from Swamp to Suburbs*. Nancy Ridley has for some years been secretary of the Christchurch Branch of the United Nations Association.

This book has been written to celebrate the centennial of Women's Suffrage an event of such importance to women in New Zealand that it is being celebrated throughout the country. The writing of this book is their contribution to that celebration.

This book has been published with the assistance of the 1993 Suffrage Centennial Trust, Whakatu Wahine.



## Chapter 1

# *Beginnings*

**T**he Christchurch Branch of the National Council of Women was formed in 1917. Before that time however such a body had already been known to Christchurch, for it was in Christchurch in 1896 that the National Council of Women of New Zealand had been formed. Many able local women took part in its beginning. Mrs Kate Sheppard became its first president and of a total of twenty-five women elected to its committee seventeen came from the city.

As with similar groups in the country impetus for forming a national council had come from overseas, this time from the United States. Women there, working alongside men in various humanitarian fields, found that they were striving to gain rights for others which they as women did not have themselves. At an anti-slavery conference in London in 1840, for example, they were not permitted to take part in debates and if they wished even only to listen they had to sit in a curtained recess. On return home they directed their energies to work for the rights of women. Women's movements were growing in strength in England and Western Europe as well as in the United States, fuelled by the spirit also of women beginning to gain entry into wide fields, to some universities and professions, to work in mills and factories, and after the invention of the typewriter into clerical work. In time they felt the need to combine as women's organisations and to meet with those in other countries. In 1888 an International Council of Women was convened in Washington, attended by woman from fifty-eight national organisations. A constitution was drawn up



*THE WOMEN'S COUNCIL Canterbury Times, April 23, 1896 (Photo: Canterbury Museum)*

*Standing: Mrs Isherwood, Mrs C. M. Alley, Miss J. Mackay, Miss Atkinson, Mrs Wallis, Mrs H. Smith, Mrs Black, Mrs Ansell, Miss Garstin, Mrs J. Smith, Miss E. Smith, Mrs Cooper, Mrs Darling, Mrs Izett.*

*Seated 2nd row: Miss Hookham, Mrs Blake, Mrs Sievewright, Mrs Hatton, Mrs Sheppard (President), Mrs Schnackenberg, Mrs Daldy, Mrs Tasker.*

*Seated in foreground: Miss Sherriff Bain, Mrs Williamson, Mrs Wells, Mrs Widdowson.*

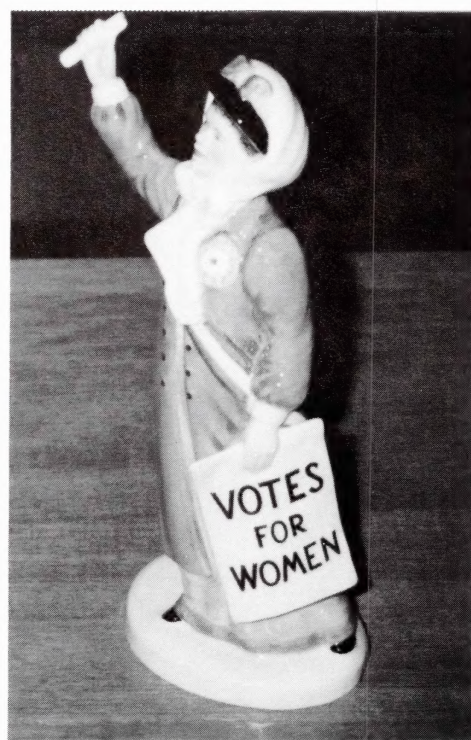




*Snapshots at the Hen Convention—Lady-President Sheppard and her Chickens. Cartoon from The Spectator, April 30, 1898*

allowing for national councils to be affiliated as soon as they were formed. Among the first to be actively interested were Canada, France, Finland and the three Scandinavian countries acting as one. Later, in 1894, Eva McLaren, a daughter of the English politician John Bright, was corresponding secretary to the International Council of Women and she wrote suggesting that Mrs Sheppard, on holiday in England at the time, should start a National Council of Women in New Zealand. New Zealand entered the international scene.

Earlier than this, in the 18th century, the Age of Enlightenment it has been called, traditional values and customs were already being questioned, not least among them concerning the place of women in society. Ideas of democracy were spreading. The new philosophy appealed to many who followed the ideals of the French Revolutionaries of 1789 for 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity' and writings such as Mary Wollstonecraft's 'Vindication of the Rights of Women' published in 1792 gave strong direction to movements for emancipation of women and towards women's suffrage. They were eagerly studied by women and men with feminist ideas in New Zealand. The thrust of these ideas led to the



*Royal Dalton figurine, 'Votes for Women', Women's Suffrage 1893—1993.*



women's suffrage movement and a climax reached when New Zealand women won the vote in 1893. The long, hard struggle for this end has been well documented in several writings, notably in 'Women's Suffrage in New Zealand' by Patricia Grimshaw (1972), and it is not further recounted in this history save to recognise its influence on the women who took part. Many of those women emerged as leaders who were to form a National Council of Women three years later. Some of them, confident after their success in the struggle for suffrage and with high hopes to achieve a better place for women, felt the need to join with others with similar ideals. A meeting was called for April, 1896, to form a national council and to it came representatives from eleven organisations from different parts of the country. The National Council of Women was formed. It planned for conventions to be held annually, in each of the main centres in turn; papers would be prepared and presented on subjects of concern.

There were many burning questions. Much fine work was planned in the next few years and reforms were achieved. Some reforms suggested would be considered radical even in the present day and many concerns of the first councils have been with the N.C.W. throughout its one hundred years.

Continuing the surge of activity in the nineties there were initial successes, but the Council faced increasing frustrations, opposition or apathy for its ideals and plans. It would seem that this led to exhaustion and disillusionment and by 1905 the decision to go into recess. It was to remain dormant for several years, until war-time conditions presented strong impetus for women to work together in council again.



# *Early Years of the Christchurch Branch 1917-1929*

By 1917 two years of war had brought women to realise that so many changes were taking place the world ahead must be different from the world they had known. Sons they had borne were being killed on the battlefields in countries far away. There must be other ways of settling the disagreements among nations. During the war many women took over men's jobs. Were they to give them up when the men returned? Who would look after the war widows and children? There would be shortage of men. How were so many single women to support themselves? These would be just some of the problems ahead.

A group of women remembering how they had worked together to get the vote for women decided it was time to revive the National Council of Women. Although it had suspended its meetings in 1905 the Council had maintained a link with the International Council through the faithful correspondence of a member, Miss Christina Henderson. In March of 1916 Mrs Kate Sheppard, Miss Christina Henderson and Miss Jessie Mackay, three women who had played a large part in the suffragist movement in the nineties, sent out

a personal letter and a circular to women in various parts of New Zealand. They were thinking not of reforming a national council but of setting up women's councils in the main centres. They believed there was a need for groups representing women. They told of a provisional committee established in Christchurch and gave suggestions for objectives for councils. As a result local councils were set up in 1917 in Wellington, Auckland and Christchurch.



*Mrs Kate Sheppard*  
Photo: University of  
Canterbury Library



*Miss Christina  
Henderson*  
Photo: Margaret  
Lovell-Smith  
Collection,  
Canterbury  
Museum



*Miss Jessie Mackay*

The meeting to form the council in Christchurch was called by the Country Women's Institute of which Mrs Sheppard was vice-president. It was held in the YWCA rooms and was presided over by the Mayoress, Mrs Holland, who in opening the meeting spoke of ways the welfare of women and children could be better safeguarded through the united action of women whose work had become more valued in wartime. She was sure this was an opportune time to form a council of women. Miss Henderson spoke of the origins of the movement in America in 1888, its extension to Great Britain and the setting up of the International Council which met every five years in various cities of the world. Others spoke of the political disabilities under which New Zealand women laboured and enumerated reforms which had to be sought to bring about changes; of the wonderful opportunity that women had to organise, to come together to alleviate the suffering that would follow the war. Mrs Tomlinson, Miss Henderson,



Mrs Wilson, Mrs Kaye, Miss Jessie Mackay, Miss Cardale and Mrs Roberts were among those who spoke in favour of forming a branch council. Finally a proposal by Mrs Roberts, seconded by Miss Lovell-Smith, was carried unanimously that a local council of women be formed.

During the next year steps were taken to organise the local council and the National Council. In December a meeting was held in Christchurch to discuss the nomination of officers and the associations to be invited to join the council. Members were keeping in mind too, the words spoken by Mrs Sheppard in her presidential address at the national convention of 1897 when she said, 'It is quite possible that it may be said that as our council is composed entirely of women, we should confine ourselves to subjects which affect women only. With this I have no sympathy; we are human beings as well as women and our humanity must take precedence over our womanhood. We are New Zealanders and therefore citizens, and whatever affects the well-being of the Commonwealth is our concern.' This policy has remained with the Council of Women.

Early in 1918 it was decided to hold a National Council of Women (N.C.W.) conference in Wellington. A few months earlier Mrs Sheppard, Miss Henderson and Miss Ellen Melville of Auckland had met in Wellington to discuss plans to hold this initial conference. Fifteen persons, three from each city and two from Gisborne, attended. They drew up a constitution, made decisions regarding the future policy of the National Council and decided that the most pressing work would be to fight further for the rights of women and the admission of women to parliament. Mrs Sheppard who was an honorary vice-president of the International Council of Women (I.C.W.) was elected president of this N.C.W. in 1918. Unfortunately Mrs Sheppard after 30 years of active work for women felt that her memory was beginning to fail and she offered her resignation. Before leaving her post, however, she wrote her report for the conference, listing matters which still needed the support of the women reminding them of things the earlier council had worked for tirelessly. 'During the war,' she wrote 'truer and clearer perceptions of truth and justice, of rights and duties have been gained and already fresh attempts are being made for a fairer and more equitable adjustment of power and responsibility. Amid the clash of high explosive and the din of battle a more vivid sense of the value of the common people, of the rights of the individual have evolved.'

There was mixed reaction by the newspapers to this report. The Dominion could not see women otherwise than as wives and mothers; but an Auckland paper referred to the able address of the president as being worthy of the occasion and showing that great opportunity had come for women. 'In four years of conflict' wrote the editor, quoting Mrs Sheppard, 'systems of government, class distinctions, national and international laws have been cast into a fiery crucible and tested until those which were faulty have crumbled into ashes and those which were basically right are emerging purified of much dross...'. To read this, he added, is to be convinced of how very much the world loses because of the enforced inactivity of women. When she says, 'Organise yourselves, start a paper to push your propaganda', she has finished a very fine address with sensible practical advice. Mrs Sheppard might have bowed out of the National Council but she remained on the executive of the Christchurch branch until 1923.

The first meetings of the branch were held in the rooms of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. When the numbers became too great they moved to the Canterbury Women's Club and then to the City Council Chambers.

There was much to do in that first year—even the 'flu epidemic of 1919 caused only a slight hesitation in activities. Miss Christina Henderson gave a list of laws (passed since suffrage) to improve the conditions of women and children. Much more had to be done, however, and the branch lost no time. Members were shocked to hear of the conditions of women and children working in ships. They pressed for:

- women inspectors to be appointed to protect the interests of women workers



- properly trained maternity nurses for St Helen's hospitals
- appointment of women sanitary inspectors
- the government to look into the sanitary conditions of food exposed for sale
- accommodation for young teachers in country areas
- more equipment and classroom space in schools
- appointment of senior women teachers with special responsibility for girls
- equal guardianship of children by both parents
- the appointment of women police officers
- the wearing of plain clothes by police attending the young
- women Justices of the Peace
- women jurors.

They made a strong protest to the government over the closing of Te Oranga Reformatory because most girls who were sent from there into domestic service were entirely unfitted to take their place as a responsible member of society; they objected to domestic training being compulsory for girls in secondary schools as it placed restriction on their choice of vocation and they wanted special schools for girls who would not benefit from the curriculum of general schools.

Later in the year came the Armistice. The war was over but there were further pressing problems. With the return of soldiers there was an acute shortage of housing and the government was asked to pass a law limiting the number of persons allowed to occupy a house. The Council supported the women in banks who, it was presumed, would have to give up their jobs to the returning men; and it pointed out to the government that as the women had to earn their own living no handicap should be placed upon girls seeking employment in banks. Because of the spreading fear of venereal disease, with the return of the soldiers from war, local councils were written to, asking if they had established clinics in their areas.

In 1919 when the first N.C.W. conference was held in Wellington, concerted action was achieved in some matters, but the address of the keynote speaker, Professor J. B. Condliffe, made rather dismal listening to the delegates.

The main theme of the conference (and of his address) was 'The Economic Independence of Women'. Delegates soon came to realise they would not really be able to change conditions until they had some say in the running of the country. They returned home to make determined efforts to promote the Women's Parliament Bill which would allow women to stand for parliament. The Branch wrote to all Canterbury Members of Parliament seeking their support for the Bill and were pleased when Mr Nosworthy, Mr McCombs and Dr Thacker all agreed to give their support. The Bill was passed that year.

By the time of its first Annual General Meeting in 1920 the Branch could look back on a time of great activity and some successes. Undoubtedly the greatest success had been the passing of the Women's Parliamentary Bill, but there had been other achievements locally. Living conditions of the poor had been brought to the notice of the authorities; the country knew now that there was an organisation that would fight for better conditions for women and children; and women's organisations knew there was an umbrella organisation and that in joining it they would have good support.

The first associations to be affiliated—the Society for the Protection of Women and Children, the Social Hygiene Society, W.C.T.U., Y.W.C.A., the Women Teachers' Association, the Mothers' Union, the Mothers' Thought Guild and the Trained Nurses' Association—were soon joined by others—the Salvation Army, the Canterbury Women's Institute, the Creches and Kindergarten Association, the Women Graduates' Association (later F.U.W.), the Home Economics Association and the Social Welfare Guild.

After the first Annual General Meeting the Branch set up its first standing committee. The Mayor had written asking for assistance in his appeal for the starving children of Europe. In response the Council appointed Miss Jessie Mackay as officer to watch world



events and to furnish a report each month. Miss Mackay became as it were the first Standing Committee. From that time onwards if information was wanted on a topic a committee was appointed to study the topic and report back at the monthly meeting. The first subjects for standing committees were: the press; peace and arbitration; laws and the legal position of women; equal moral standards; suffrage and the rights of the citizen; public health; education; immigration and emigration; trade and the professions. Over the next ten years the interests of the council roamed widely, dealing with topics affecting the lives of the ordinary people in the city and the country.

For 1920 the council decided to study the needs of the child. Members were disturbed when, on investigation, they saw the conditions in which many children were living.

They wanted

- suitable hospitals for those suffering mild mental derangements. (A visit was made to Sunnyside to see the new receiving hospital)
- a separate hospital for idiot children and low grade imbecile children who were maintained in general hospitals
- separate farm colonies to segregate and employ the feeble-minded, for their own protection
- segregation for life of those guilty of sex offences

Members then looked at conditions in schools and found there much of which they disapproved. They also wanted:

- greater attention to fumigation and cleaning of buildings to prevent epidemics
- the cessation of charges against destitute and unfortunate children in juvenile courts
- a training home or an institution other than a gaol to be established for female offenders
- some form of film censorship, (The government followed up this request and had films classified as A, suitable for adults or U, for universal showing.)

There was much for the Branch to do.

In 1921 another national conference was held in Wellington. The delegates found that they shared similar problems. The Christchurch delegates, Miss Henderson, Mrs Henderson-Begg and Mrs T. E. Taylor told of their work on many sub-committees of their branch. The most urgent matters to emerge for all branches were to have women police, women on juries and women censors.

This conference was a particularly happy one, especially for two pronouncements. Mrs Kate Sheppard was honoured as the first Life Member of N.C.W.; and the Council received news of a legacy left by Mrs Daldy of Auckland, one of the founders of the National Council in 1896. That legacy was used for travel expenses and many years later, in 1974, for setting up national headquarters. It was a most generous bequest.

It was decided that Christchurch would host the conference the following year so much of 1922 was spent in preparations. A civic reception in the Provincial Council Chambers was arranged by the Mayor and university staff were called upon to give lectures and lead discussions. A talk of special interest was given by one of the local N.C.W. members, Mrs T. E. Taylor, on the need for economic independence for women. She urged 'courageous and serious consideration of women concerning their present economic subjection in the married state' and she pleaded for all women to get an education to enable them to become economically independent. Several other matters arose from the conference. All branches were asked to work for—the removal of sex discrimination in the public service; payment to prisoners to enable them to pay maintenance to their families; the appointment of women Justices of the Peace; the appointment of women police to work in the interests of women and children; and further the Branch wanted the banning of pernicious literature among the youth; they asked for appointment of women to Prison Boards; they wanted the City Council to provide sufficient dwellings to enable all people to have adequate living conditions; and they urged the government





*Mrs A. I. Fraer,  
President 1924—27  
Dominion President 1927  
Photo: Canterbury Museum*

to alter the Industrial School Act so that young people would be committed to an industrial school, before being committed to gaol.

In the midst of all this social questioning Miss Henderson left for a trip to the United States and England and Mrs Fraer became the new president. Members farewelled Miss Henderson at the Canterbury Women's Club, presented her with a copy of Johannes Andersen's book on Folk Lore in Aotearoa and sent a telegram to her on the Tahiti, wishing her godspeed. Miss Henderson had been a driving force in the Branch since its inception and they would miss her experience and enthusiasm.

The work of the Branch continued:

- there was strong exception to the statement by the Medical Superintendent of the hospital in his annual report that 'Women are morally responsible for all the V.D. troubles'. They wrote to him pointing out the inequality in his judgement of moral standards and suggesting that the control of V.D. was a shared responsibility
- they sought ways prisoners should be helped after they were discharged
- they demanded equal pay for equal work
- they brought to notice the long hours children worked on milk-rounds and paper-runs
- they asked for the separation of Child Welfare from the Education Department
- members felt some personal responsibility for the girls at Burwood Home. They visited the Home, took out gifts, entertained girls to supper and worked for many years to have a school set up for them
- another matter of concern was the lack of a crematorium in the city. When the City Council was approached members were advised to draw up a petition, which they did, collecting over two thousand names. The City Council finally agreed that a crematorium was necessary and began to make plans for the building
- they complained of a lack of suitable conveniences in shops and offices for girls in the city and they waited on the Mayor to discuss with him the site for a women's rest room.

But for all their hard work it was the lack of women in Parliament that was of great concern for many branch members. No woman had taken up the opportunity or challenge to stand for election to Parliament. Mrs T. E. Taylor urged women to come out as candidates, and to support other women regardless of party politics. 'It is thirty-five years since we got the vote and still we are seeking legislation on child welfare, maternal morality, deficient children, state children, women police and women jurors, film censorship, women delegates to the League of Nations, equal opportunities for women. If we cared as we pretend to do surely the years would have not passed without our returning a woman to Parliament.' Members were certainly disappointed that no woman had come forward. They wrote to Lady Aberdeen (an early president of I.C.W., and a person knowledgeable on all Council matters) and asked her if they could put forward candidates. Unfortunately her reply was that the Council could support but not nominate candidates.

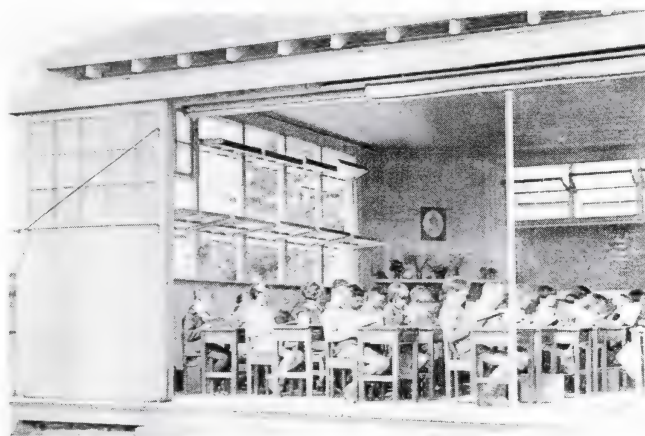
By the end of 1929 members might look back on eleven busy years. What had they achieved? Women could not stand for parliament; but women Justices of the Peace had been appointed: Mrs Fraer, Mrs T. E. Taylor and Mrs Roberts; special schools were set up for retarded children; the City Council agreed to erect a municipal Rest Room for women; an institution had been opened for young girl offenders to avoid their being sent to mental hospitals or gaol; Burwood Home had been opened; women were appointed to Prison Boards; Mrs Fraer was appointed a women co-censor of Films; the City Council agreed to



erect a crematorium and broadcasts for children and for women were started.

There were other appointments of note: Mrs Chaplin to the Board of Governors of Canterbury College; Mrs Roberts to the Hospital Board and Mrs McCombs to the City Council.

Much had been achieved in those eleven years.



*In 1924 an open-air classroom, especially designed to suit the New Zealand climate was built at the Fendalton School in Christchurch. Photos: Open Air School League*

#### Officers and Executive Members 1920-29

##### 1920

President: Miss Henderson  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs Sheppard, Mrs Roberts  
Secretary: Miss H. K. Lovell-Smith

##### 1921

President: Miss Henderson  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs Sheppard, Mrs Roberts  
Secretary/Treasurer: Miss H. K. Lovell-Smith

##### 1922

President: Miss Henderson  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs Sheppard, Mrs Roberts, Mrs Fraer  
Secretary: Miss H. K. Lovell-Smith

##### 1923

President: Miss Henderson  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs Sheppard, Mrs Fraer, Mrs Roberts  
Secretary: Miss Lovell-Smith/Miss Howlett

##### 1924

President: Mrs Fraer  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs Roberts, Miss Chaplin, Miss Jamieson  
Secretary: Miss Lovell-Smith/Miss J. Howlett

##### 1925

President: Mrs Fraer  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs Roberts, Miss Henderson, Miss Chaplin  
Secretary: Miss H. Lovell-Smith/Miss J. Howlett

##### 1926

President: Mrs Fraer  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs T. E. Taylor, Miss Henderson, Miss Chaplin, Miss Jamieson  
Secretary: Miss Lovell-Smith  
Treasurer: Miss J. Howlett

##### 1927

President: Mrs Fraer/Miss Jamieson (Mrs Fraer, now Dominion President, resigned)  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs Fraer, Mrs T. E. Taylor, Miss Henderson, Miss Cardale  
Honorary Secretary: Miss H. K. Lovell-Smith  
Treasurer: Miss Howlett

##### 1928

President: Miss Jamieson  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs Fraer, Miss K. W. Lovell-Smith, Miss Henderson, Miss H. W. Low  
Secretary: Miss H. K. Lovell-Smith  
Treasurer: Miss J. Howlett

##### 1929

President: Miss Jamieson  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs Fraer, Mrs T. E. Taylor, Mrs Roberts, Miss Henderson  
Secretary: Miss H. Lovell-Smith



### Chapter 3

## *The Depression and Efforts for Peace 1930–1939*

**T**he depression, the passing of old friends and the fear of the declaration of war were overriding concerns of the 1930s. Through them all the Council carried on work for the betterment of all women and men.

Peace, disarmament, the League of Nations and its work were the main topics of discussion throughout this time. Some members attended the Disarmament Conference in the Albert Hall, London, in 1931 when sixty nations were represented by more than four thousand people. They left with a firm impression that world disarmament was a possibility for gaining world peace. The following year others had the opportunity to attend the New Zealand Conference on Disarmament and members were heartened to receive a stirring letter from Lady Aberdeen asking all members to work for world peace. In 1936 the committee asked all affiliates to study some aspects of Peace and Disarmament in their programmes. Several delegates promised five shillings per week for three years towards the work of the Peace and Disarmament Committee. (For many girls in domestic service it was a week's wages.) In 1938 the secretary of the Women's International Peace and Disarmament Committee in Geneva spoke of her work throughout the world at a special Branch luncheon. A few months later Miss Havelaar, the Branch President, spoke on the League of Nations and its humanitarian work in supplying all organisations with technical information on subjects for the betterment of living conditions. When Mr Chamberlain returned to Britain after the Berlin crisis bringing 'peace with honour' the National President conveyed to him the thanks of the women of New Zealand for his efforts to bring about peace. It was not until Jewish women became delegates to the Branch that members learnt first hand of the horrors being perpetrated in Germany.

Council members continued to work hard.

- they raised money for Canterbury's share (five thousand pounds) to endow an Obstetric Chair and a scholarship in obstetrics
- they provided collectors for the Napier Earthquake Relief Fund
- they wanted additions and amendments to the Child Welfare Act of 1893
- they brought speakers from overseas to try to persuade the government to appoint women police
- they looked into the training courses for nurses in private hospitals
- they publicised the dangers of septic abortions and the indiscriminate use of drugs
- they viewed with concern the sale of contraceptives to youth under the age of 18
- they complained that the Art Union funds were allocated mainly to sports clubs, only a very small proportion going to people in distress
- they asked the Education Board to appoint a truant officer as many neglected children were roaming the streets
- they asked for action on smoke abatement.

There was still a lot to do, but there was some joy. With a great sense of achievement they attended the opening in 1932 of the new rest rooms in the Square; and they sent a letter of approval to the Education Department on the appointment of a part-time Vocational Guidance Officer for girls.



Two quite vocal affiliated groups came to the fore in the thirties—the Humanitarian League, concerned especially with cruelty to animals, and the Sunlight League, encouraging healthy living especially for children.

It was the affects of the depression that concerned the Council most. The Unemployment Bill 1930 gave cause for strong protest. Mrs Fraer, before the Committee of the House, gave evidence that the plight of women had not been seriously considered. Amendment was expected. Early in the same year the Mayor had formed a Women's Unemployment Committee to which the Branch was asked to send a representative. They appointed Miss Mildred Trent who was at the time manageress of Beath's Tearooms. Little did they realise how heavily involved they were later to become. Miss Trent had qualified in Domestic Science in Edinburgh before such training was available in New Zealand. She assisted in the setting up of training centres in cooking and sewing, first in the St John's Church Hall and in the Toc H Rooms and she drew up a scheme for training women and girls in domestic work, especially in cooking, with a view to providing work opportunities.

This scheme was later adopted by the Labour Department and developed to become the Women's Employment Centre in the Majestic Building. Hundreds of women were given instruction and sent out to families needing domestic help. Their wages were subsidised by the Government. Those in need—unfit for work or elderly—were given a hot midday meal by a group of volunteers who took the meals out in special containers. By August fifty meals a day were being supplied. Members provided crockery, cutlery and utensils for the Centre and canvassed firms to find jobs for the women and girls. The Y.W.C.A. also helped, keeping a register of women unemployed. Over forty were registered in 1931. A year later when Miss Trent spoke to the branch on 'Unemployed Women and Girls' she gave a resumé of work at the Centre—156 girls had been placed in the preceding six months, 9,421 meals distributed and 152 girls employed at the Centre.

By 1933 it was reported that fewer girls were coming forth as registered unemployed. There was a glimmer of hope—perhaps the worst of the depression was over. At the last meeting of that year the Branch dealt with some aspects of planning for national reconstruction and with the coming of the new year, 1934, there was a slight rising of spirits. They could pause and take account of achievements. They had contributed to endow a hospital bed in memory of Annie Herbert, one of their founding members; and they congratulated many members for recent appointments to public positions: Mrs Fraer had been successful in City Council elections and several members had been appointed Justices of the Peace. A vote of sympathy was given to Mrs Elizabeth McCombs and her family on the death in 1933 of her husband, Mr J. McCombs, a Canterbury M.P. who had always supported N.C.W. causes and had helped to get women's voices heard in Parliament. Members were pleased that Elizabeth agreed to stand for Parliament in his place, won the Lyttelton seat, and became the first woman member in the New Zealand Parliament.

There were other pleasant occasions too. Lady Aberdeen toured New Zealand under the auspices of the Women's Institute and many members were able to meet her or enjoy her broadcast message to N.C.W. Members were delighted too when Lord and Lady Bledisloe visited the Women's Employment Centre.



*Mrs E. R. McCombs, Christchurch M.P.  
1933–35 Photo: Canterbury Museum*



As the country was creeping out of the depression the Branch could look to its own organisation. It decided to publish a monthly bulletin which would be sold at twopence apiece. Miss Chaplin and Miss Havelaar offered to be the editors and Miss Jamieson and Miss Cooper to be the business managers. Work continued in the sub-committees—housing, justice, public hospitals, employment, broadcasting and the Civil Watch Committee. Two more were added—cultural relations of the Pacific and economic interdependence of Pacific countries.

Later the Broadcasting Board offered the Council broadcast time for fifteen minutes each Thursday at 11am. Miss Havelaar, Miss Tomlinson and Miss Gow organised programmes for these sessions.

1934 should have been a happy year with the national conference being held in the city, but members were saddened when they heard of the death of one of their founders, Mrs Kate Sheppard (Mrs W. Lovell-Smith), at the age of 85. Mrs Sheppard had worked for women's rights since she had joined the W.C.T.U. in the eighteen eighties and had lived to see many of those rights obtained, outliving most of her contemporaries.

Later in 1934 the Branch held a special reception for Miss Jessie Mackay, another foundation member, and made a presentation, a token of affection and appreciation of her work for women over almost half a century. Jessie Mackay died in 1938. In 1935 members were saddened to learn of the death of Mrs Elizabeth McCombs. She had served in Parliament for only a short time but her initiative gave other women encouragement to consider entering the political scene.

Because so many women were entering public life a statement was issued by the National Council and delivered by Miss Trent to the Branch. 'The National Council of Women is non-party, non-sectarian, organised in the interests of no one propaganda. Its object is to unite all organised societies of women for mature counsel and co-operation and the attainment of justice and freedom for women for all that makes for the good of humanity. If women stand for Parliament or for local bodies, they are congratulated and wished well by the Council, irrespective of their political opinion and when a vote is taken at the Council table it is the considered opinion of the societies and the delegates they

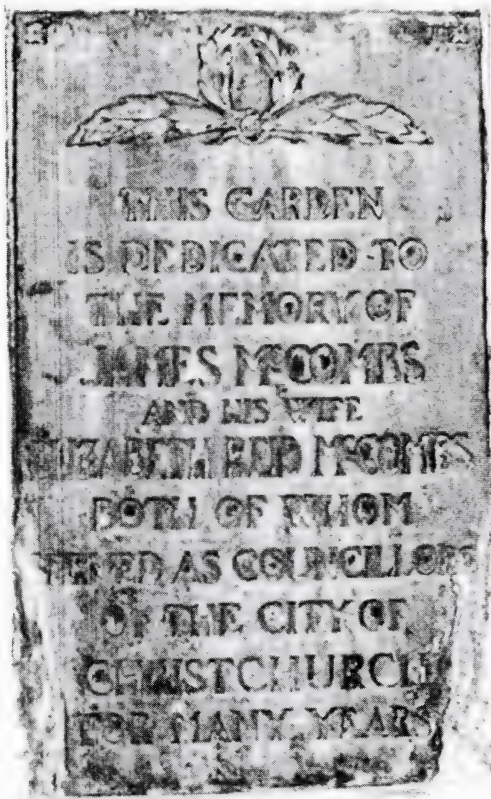
represent.' The statement endorsed Lady Aberdeen's earlier pronouncement when her opinion had been sought at the time when the Branch, desperate to get a woman elected to Parliament, had thought of selecting and supporting a woman candidate themselves.

At the end of the year Miss Chaplin took over from Miss Havelaar as editor of the monthly 'Bulletin' and at the Annual General Meeting in 1937 Miss Jamieson was thanked for the eighteen years she had served the Council, during which time she had held practically every office. Mrs T. E. Taylor was congratulated on having the O.B.E. conferred upon her and the Branch contributed to appeals for memorials to



*Part of the McCombs Memorial Garden in the Woolston Park, Christchurch.*





*This garden is dedicated to the memory of James McCombs and his wife Elizabeth McCombs, both of whom served as Councillors of Christchurch for many years.*

Mrs Elizabeth McCombs and to Miss Pollrick, the Director of Plunket Nursing. A beautiful garden was created in memory of Elizabeth and her husband in Woolston Park.

The Branch celebrated its twenty-first birthday in 1937. Mrs Kent Johnson had made a birthday cake with 21 candles and Mrs Tomlinson was given the honour of cutting the cake. The Branch took the opportunity to confer life membership on Mrs T. E. Taylor for her valuable services to N.C.W., her interests in women and children and her outstanding work for peace. Unfortunately Mrs Taylor was ill and not able to be present but a letter and a posy were sent to her. Posies were presented to four other foundation members—Mrs Tomlinson, Mrs Roberts, Mrs Fraer and Miss C. Henderson. The birthday party had been a fine celebration and a most interesting look-back into the past.

The basic work of the branch continued:

- delegates were asked to report regarding employment, professional or otherwise, where women had been refused a position on account of sex or marital status
- the government was asked to consider unemployed women on the same basis as unemployed men so far as relief was concerned
- they complained to the Government about their exclusion of single women from benefits under the pension scheme, contending that the pension should be available to spinsters and widows, the means test and age to be the guiding principles
- they asked for women to be attached to Social Security staff to deal with women applicants
- they supported the conducting of marriage ceremonies by women ministers or marriage celebrants
- they requested the Government to establish a Court of Conciliation to which estranged married people might come with a view of preventing subsequent divorce
- they wanted laws to be drawn up in a manner which would show what a woman could legally claim for herself in a divorce suit
- they kept demanding the appointment of women police
- they were pleased when one of their members was appointed by the Government to a committee to investigate the maternity services in the Dominion
- they wanted more consideration for the difficulties of unmarried mothers and better help and assistance for her 'in her emergency'
- they wanted leaflets distributed on the dangers of abortion
- they appealed to the Government for a properly equipped obstetric hospital in Christchurch
- they asked that every maternity patient should have a labour ward to herself



*Mrs Elizabeth Taylor*  
*Photo: Canterbury Museum*





*The Women's Rest Rooms and Creche, Cathedral Square.*

- they were seriously concerned over insanitary conditions and overcrowding in houses during the depression
- there was a plea to the Government to build larger homes as there were not sufficient three or more bedroom ones
- again they wanted an inquiry into the administration of the Child Welfare Department—7000 in care, 503 from the courts, 50 child welfare officers
- they asked that swimming tuition be compulsory in schools
- once again they asked for payment of prisoners for maintenance of their families
- they asked the government to give mental patients a little money, perhaps a week's wages, when they left the hospital
- they asked that a register of mental defectives should be kept, that marriage should



*The Crematorium—opened in 1936—the front addition was added in 1940. Photo: Green and Hahn*





*EPH—Barnett Avenue—1938–40. First units built. Photo: Christchurch City Council*

not be permitted for those on the register, and sterilisation of certain classes of mental defectives be given effect

- they complained of the ‘pernicious literature’ coming into the country and cheap periodicals which they thought would contribute to juvenile crime
- they protested over street hoardings especially the Craven A one in Victoria Street
- they complained of the drinking in cars outside dance halls
- and of the untidy streets, of untidy garden plots and a lack of rubbish tins in the city.

One topic which caused much discussion was the remit from one of the sub-committees ‘that parents, kindergartens, and primary schools be urged to give children of our country at least some knowledge of the things of God so they may have some foundation on which to hold’. Because there was too much dissent on the matter, that remit was not sent up to the national executive.

All was not just hard work and some special functions were held. There were now so many delegates that a bigger meeting room had to be found. It was decided to use Hay’s Lounge which was in a central position and provided generously at a low rate (seven shillings and sixpence). A function enjoyed especially was a luncheon given to the wives of the lecturers who were taking part in the New Education Fellowship. For those who attended, the New Education Conference was an exhilarating experience as world famous educationists told of new education practices in other parts of the world. (Social Studies, a subject in its own right was introduced but it was many years before New Zealand saw it as anything different from History or Geography.)

Abortion was proving a great problem as people could not afford babies in the depression. Dr Bennett and Dr O’Brien asked the Branch to call a meeting of all their organisations to address them first in ‘a drawing-room manner’ and so prepare for a public meeting to be addressed by Dr Doris Gordon. Mrs Acland offered the use of her large drawing-room at ‘Chippenham’, but this proved too small and the meeting was held at Bishop’s Court. The following public meeting was a good one, attended by over 400 people.

By 1939 the Branch could look back on some success. The crematorium which the members had asked for the city was opened and the members were invited to inspect the new facility, the scheme they had put forward for cottages for old age pensioners was



finally after great persistence and special support from Councillor Barnett, accepted by the Council.

Looking back over ten years Council members might well have been pleased with what they had achieved but they were saddened by the passing of old friends. One was Lady Aberdeen, a veteran of the International Council who was described by Miss Trent, the Branch President, as one of the most wonderful women of her time. As early as 1889 she had been elected president of I.C.W. and she had been a strong influence for well-being for thousands of women over the world during her life time. Local women attended a memorial service for her in Trinity Congregational Church. The local branch too was sad to lose several more long-serving members—Miss L. M. Lovell-Smith, a valuable worker in the early days of the Council; Miss Chaplin, a vice-president, for many years treasurer of the Branch and one of the prime movers in getting cottages for old age pensioners; Mrs Fraer a vigorous and inspiring member who in 1924 was elected president of the Branch and in 1927 became Dominion President.

Throughout the thirties there had been desperate efforts for peace but the world seemed to come closer and closer to war. Finally on September 1, 1939, war was declared. Miss Havelaar, the President, spoke to members at the Branch meeting—‘It is with very sad hearts that we face the future’. She appealed to one and all to play their part in the difficult days ahead and asked those who were free to do so to take part in First Aid or Home Nursing Service. In a letter sent to the Government and to the civil authorities she offered the services of the Branch in whatever way it might help and she wrote also to the President of I.C.W. expressing sympathy with women all over the world at the time of grave crisis.

From then on Branch members were concerned with war-time activities though still keeping watch on affairs of local and central government.



*Lady Aberdeen—Veteran member of  
I.C.W.  
At the Edinburgh Council Meeting,  
1938.*



## Officers and Executive Members 1930-39

### 1930

President: Miss Jamieson  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs Fraer, Mrs Robertson, Miss Trent  
Secretary: Miss H. K. Lovell-Smith  
Treasurer: Miss E. A. Chaplin

### 1931

President: Miss H. K. Lovell-Smith  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs Fraer, Mrs Roberts, Miss Trent  
Secretary: Miss I. M. J. Jamieson  
Treasurer: Miss E. A. Chaplin

### 1932

President: Miss H. K. Lovell-Smith  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs Fraer, Miss Trent, Miss Cardale  
Secretary: Miss Jamieson  
Treasurer: Miss Chaplin

### 1933

President: Mrs Roberts  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs Fraer, Mrs Piritt, Miss Trent, Miss Cardale  
Secretary: Miss Chaplin  
Treasurer: Miss Jamieson

### 1934

President: Miss Trent  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs Roberts, Mrs Taylor, Mrs Tomlinson  
Secretary: Miss Cooper  
Treasurer: Miss Chaplin

### 1935

President: Miss Trent  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs Lorimer, Mrs Roberts, Miss Jamieson, Miss Gow  
Secretary: Miss F. L. Cooper  
Treasurer: Miss Chaplin

### 1936

President: Miss Trent  
Vice-Presidents: Miss I. M. Jamieson, Mrs W. G. Roberts, Mrs J. Mackay, Mrs R. McLaren  
Secretary: Miss Cooper  
Treasurer: Miss Chaplin

### 1937

President: Miss M. Havelaar  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs W. Mackay, Mrs W. G. Roberts, Miss M. Gow, Miss M. Trent  
Secretary: Miss Cooper  
Treasurer: Miss E. A. Chaplin

### 1938

President: Miss M. Havelaar  
Vice-Presidents: Miss E. A. Chaplin, Mrs Lorimer, Mrs Roberts, Mrs Barrell  
Secretary: Mrs W. Mackay  
Treasurer: Miss Tomlinson

### 1939

President: Miss M. Havelaar  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs G. W. Barrell, Mrs W. G. Roberts, Mrs J. Lorimer, Major Wood  
Secretary: Mrs W. Mackay



# *War-time and Reconstruction* *1940 -1949*

Thoughts of peace and prosperity were put aside as the country became involved in war-time activities. As the year finished there were some satisfying achievements to record: the first of the cottages for old age pensioners were nearing completion and because most pensioners had little in the way of possessions, furnishings were provided mainly through the assistance of Miss Enright, Lady Editor of The Press. Miss Tomlinson, an official visitor to the hospital, organised librarians to take books round the hospital wards. She herself, with a nurse, had taken a holiday cottage at South Brighton to give twenty patients a ten-day holiday.

But it was to war-time conditions chiefly that Council members were to direct their energies for the next few years. They thought they should promote a Women's Voluntary Peace Corps and make a register of women available for service in an emergency. Miss McLean recommended the formation of a women's voluntary land army. The idea was readily supported, a sub-committee was set up with Miss McLean as convener and a public meeting called. One hundred and sixty women attended and they were to become the core of the Christchurch Women's Voluntary Land Army which for several years grew produce to be distributed to needy families.

The formation of the Welcome Club saw some members heavily involved in arranging entertainment for soldiers. The Branch was considering what active war work might be done by members—most of them had home duties or were engaged in other occupations—when Mrs Kent Johnson recalled a successful club in Glasgow which had catered for the



*Welcome Club. Mrs Kent Johnson with some of the visitors.*





*Christmas Day 1940.*

armed forces in World War I. She suggested that they prepare meals and care for the welfare of men in camp. After some deliberation they decided to support her idea. The Returned Services Association was approached to see if such a club might be acceptable and so also was the Mayor, who called a public meeting to discuss the matter. Out of these meetings arose the Welcome Club, administered by a citizens' committee under Mrs Kent Johnson's leadership.

The old Art Gallery was used for Clubrooms but later the club moved into Millers' old building in Lichfield Street. In just three weeks the premises was converted for the club—a ballroom downstairs and a large supper-room able to cater for 140 upstairs, a lounge, and a games-room. Altogether over 600 men could be accommodated. Sometimes every bit of space was used, as it was when Mrs Kent Johnson asked at the Burnham Military Camp if there were any soldiers who wouldn't be going home for Christmas. Indeed there were, and that year Christmas dinner was provided by the women for over 650 men! At that time there were over 80 affiliated organisations assisting. The men from Burnham Camp were always appreciative of the work of Mrs Kent Johnson and the ladies at the Welcome Club. During the short time she was in Christchurch Mrs Kent Johnson did an amazing amount of other social work in the city. She was a hard-working member of N.C.W. and the convener of a sub-committee which investigated the need for a new maternity hospital and fought hard for its establishment. She founded the Friends of St Helen's, but it was long after she had left Christchurch that the foundation stone was laid for the hospital. When Dr Gordon came to Christchurch to discuss the urgent matter of staffing of maternity hospitals she said, 'What happens when you leave your work in the hands of harassed men? You have the answer in St Helen's—the need was there in 1913. You now have the foundation stone!' The Council wondered when the National Women's Hospital would have been built if Mrs Kent Johnson and Friends of St Helen's had not put pressure on the government.

Other Council work arose from war-time conditions. A scheme was outlined for the evacuation of the elderly, children and invalids, should the need arise. Members ex-





*The first women to join the Police Force, 5 May, 1941. (In plain clothes.) Photo: Canterbury Museum*

pressed concern over young girls loitering in the Square with soldiers, they asked for auxiliary police to patrol the streets; they wanted better facilities at the V.D. clinic in the public hospital; they asked for sex education to be given in schools and for the liquor laws to be strictly enforced. They asked for supervised centres to be set up for those whose mothers worked in essential industries and they questioned the government's right to ask girls under twenty to work in Wellington without their parents' permission. (The Post and Telegraph Department ran a hostel for young girls at Oriental Bay and the YWCA were supervising 48–50 girls working in ammunition factories.) Help was needed in country homes and they suggested that students and teachers be asked to give up some weeks of their holidays to help on the farms. Members were overjoyed at the news that several appointments of women police had been made and the training of women police had begun. Pamphlets on nutritious school lunches were distributed; concern was again expressed that there was no religious instruction for many children in schools. After reports of some disturbing incidents with state wards they again asked for better training for Child Welfare Officers. During the year the Education Committee presented a report on working mothers and children which the Council studied for some months. They asked the Minister of Education to establish an Occupational Centre in Christchurch for backward children and were very pleased when a little later the Department opened such a centre in Merivale Lane.

Work for the war effort continued. At one stage the Mayoress was asked for help in finishing seven thousand pairs of socks for the soldiers overseas. The socks had been given by two city firms but there were no machines in New Zealand that could finish them off. Delegates decided to do that work themselves. There was hardly a facet of life in New Zealand that members did not have views on, perhaps well discussed during their hours of sorting and mending clothes at the Lady Galway Guild.

In 1945 the war ended and the Council turned its attention to the problems of rehabilitation and reconstruction. Groups were encouraged to raise money for more food for children in Europe. Later they were delighted to find they had collected six and a half





*Speakers at the Peace Rally.*



◀ Mrs R. D. Neale ...  
*'Unaware of the power  
that they wield.'*



▶ Mrs A. C. Purchas ...  
*deplores broken homes  
in city.*

tons of food for Europe. They asked the Council to appoint women with experience in the Labour Department to help in the rehabilitation of women. They were still trying after many years to have British women marrying aliens able to keep their own nationality.

The Reconstruction sub-committee presented other requests for action—adequate provision of housing; a national education programme on parent craft, home craft and child care; domestic assistance during sickness; and training for citizenship alongside the training for trades and professions.

Peace study groups were set up to study moral, political and economic reconstruction, New Zealand's place in the development of the Far East and the problems of the returning soldier and his occupation when demobilised. They studied the International Monetary Agreements and were concerned that should the Bretton Woods Agreement be signed countries would lose their sovereign rights. Speakers with special knowledge in the topics of study were asked to speak at the monthly meetings.

The Council was pleased that members had responded generously to requests for help over the war years—from nurses needing to reduce domestic work (some members worked at weekends to help out); for representatives to serve on the Licensing Board and the Manpower Appeal Board; to canvass for funds for the Victory War Loan for Canterbury.



Three Council women served on the Industrial Manpower Appeal Committee when it was set up—Mrs F. G. Griff, Mrs R. D. Neale and Miss Crosby Morris.

There were others matters to be attended to on the home front. New associations with new interests asked to affiliate—The Sunlight League among other matters questioned the purity of milk sold; the Housewives Union questioned the supply and the price of goods in shops; and they complained bitterly over the continuation of rationing. Two Maori women were invited to join the Branch as honorary associate members—Mrs Ryan representing Maori women in Tuahiwi and Miss Paynter those in Christchurch. Miss Havelaar continued organising the weekly broadcast on pioneer women. Members again discussed many times the question of abortion and put forward remits suggesting a confidential committee should make an enquiry concerning the practice; the Education Committee presented a very thorough report, 'The Life of a Girl, 14 to 16 Years'. The Council stressed the need for Community Centres in new housing areas to include a creche, a nursery school, kindergarten, Plunket rooms and a playing area for young children.

1946 brought refreshing exuberance. The Council decided to hold a Women's Rally, its purpose being to rouse the average housewife, particularly those of the younger generation, to take an intelligent interest in the social, educational and national, affairs of her country, to help her realise her responsibilities as a citizen. The Rally was held in March 1947 and what a Rally it was! Four hundred women came from many parts of the country. The delegates were fired with enthusiasm. Twelve women spoke the first morning, and twenty more speakers in the afternoon and evening. 'Our national heritage was the British character,' said one 'with its qualities of resolution, dogged perseverance, resilience, gay humour and adventure. It has taken centuries to grow. It is our future we must keep alive and add to it something of our own.' 'Why not a woman Minister of Finance? Women run the finances at home?' demanded another amidst murmurs of approval. 'What is true in the home is true in wider fields.' 'We have had fifty-four years of freedom and if we don't see about using it properly we will very soon lose it. A dull-witted democracy faces the prospect of a revival of tyranny and oppression. We must learn to think or be damned.' 'Democracy cannot work unless its citizens are politically intelligent.' 'We must restore the old charm and attraction for the home as the centre of family life.' 'Housing and town-planning are our concern.' The Rally was an experiment, a very successful one. The following year another rally was held, this one a Peace Rally, with special emphasis on the contribution women can make to achieving peace.

No rally was held the next year as preparations were in train to mark the jubilee year of the International Council of Women, but there were two lesser functions which the members enjoyed very much—the celebration of Women's Suffrage and the visit of Helen Keller. The Suffrage Jubilee was held on Sunday, September 19. Prior to that date Miss Black and the Ladies' City Choir had broadcast from 3YA publicizing the event and asking women who had voted in 1893 to write in to them. Some 60–70 'first voters' did so and were invited to the function. Three speakers, Miss Henderson, Miss Havelaar and Mrs L. Webb spoke about the special day. Each guest was presented with a posy of flowers, a copy of the order of service and a badge. It was a specially interesting and happy occasion as was also the visit of Helen Keller who wrote later to the branch, as she thanked them for the flowers they had given her, 'All my life flowers have spoken to me with a language delicate beyond



*Miss Mary McLean  
President 1946—50*



human utterance ... added to their lovely form is a fragrance that is the spiritual joy and the inspiration I derive from a visit to your lovely country.'

Another venture by the Branch was to 'adopt' a little Italian girl, Antonietta Ronce. Food parcels were sent to her. Members knitted and made beautiful clothes and one member dressed a little Maori doll for her. The Branch kept in touch with Antonietta until there was no further need for assistance.

#### Officers and Executive 1940-49

##### 1940

President: Miss M. Havelaar  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs C. W. Barrell, Mrs J. Lorimer,  
Brigadier Gray, Miss Trent  
Secretary: Mrs W. Mackay  
Treasurer: Miss T. Tomlinson

##### 1941

President: Miss M. Havelaar  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs Barrell, Miss McLean, Mrs Lorimer,  
Miss Trent  
Secretary: Mrs W. Mackay  
Treasurer: Miss T. Tomlinson

##### 1942

President: Miss M. Havelaar  
Vice-Presidents: Miss McLean, Mrs Barrell, Mrs Lorimer,  
Mrs F. J. Grigg  
Secretary: Mrs W. Mackay  
Treasurer: Miss T. Tomlinson

##### 1943

President: Miss M. Havelaar  
Vice-Presidents: Miss McLean, Mrs Lorimer, Mrs Barrell,  
Miss Tomlinson  
Secretary: Mrs W. Mackay  
Treasurer: Mrs W. H. Cattell

##### 1944

President: Mrs C. Barrell  
Vice-Presidents: Miss E. Cousins, Mrs Lorimer, Miss  
McLean, Mrs L. C. L. Averill  
Secretary: Mrs F. G. Grigg  
Treasurer: Miss M. B. Lovell-Smith

##### 1945

President: Mrs C. Barrell  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs L. Averill, Mrs Lorimer, Mrs G. H.  
Watts, Miss McLean  
Secretary: Miss Grigg  
Treasurer: Miss M. B. Lovell-Smith

##### 1946

President: Miss McLean  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs L. Averill, Mrs C.I. Crowley, Mrs  
Lorimer, Mrs G. H. Wells  
Secretary: Mrs K. R. Hunt  
Treasurer: Mrs F. Grigg

##### 1947

President: Miss M. McLean  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs Mackay, Mrs Averill, Mrs Crowley  
and Mrs Searle  
Secretary: Mrs Cattell  
Treasurer: Mrs Hills

##### 1948

President: Miss McLean  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs Fairweather, Mrs McInnes, Mrs  
Morton, Miss E. M. Guy  
Secretary: Mrs Cattell  
Treasurer: Mrs Hills/Miss M. B. Lovell-Smith

##### 1949

President: Miss McLean  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs Fairweather, Miss E. M. Guy, Mrs L.  
Averill, Major Wood  
Secretary: Mrs Cattell  
Treasurer: Miss H. Lovell-Smith



# *Time for Consolidation* *1950–1959*

**T**he exuberance of the rallies of the late forties overflowed in the preparing for the special occasion in 1950—the Golden Jubilee Conference of the National Council, marking fifty years since the affiliation of the New Zealand Council with the International Council. The conference was held in the Provincial Chambers where the first convention of women's groups in Christchurch had been held in 1896.

Invited guests came from far and near to honour the occasion. Among them were four women who were direct descendants of the early settlers: Miss K. Gresson, Miss C. Bowen, Mrs J. Barker; and three close relatives of the first women of the Council: Miss M. Lovell-Smith (step-daughter of Mrs Kate Sheppard), Mrs C. L. Crowley (niece of Mrs Ada Wells) and Mrs C. N. Page (daughter of Mrs T. E. Taylor).

The president of the National Council, Mrs M. J. Forde of Wellington, led the conference. Messages of goodwill came from many parts of the world—from the Queen at Balmoral, Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt U.S.A., Dr Jeanne Eder president of I.C.W., from presidents of other countries which had Women's Councils, Lady Freyberg and the Mayor of the city.

A most important person, the chief speaker, was Mrs Clara Alley one of the band of women who formed the original council. She spoke of 'those early days ... we were full of hope for what we could do for our country and for mankind. Looking back I know that many of the reforms the council instigated have now become law, but we have had four wars since that time. In these mechanical, scientific wars women and children suffer untold



*Mrs Clara Alley, lighting candles, Golden Jubilee Cake 1950 Photo: Canterbury Museum*



misery'. Later, at supper time, Mrs Alley blew out the candles and cut the jubilee cake. Congratulations poured in from all sides. The next day, International Day, a panel of eleven speakers including women from India, Malaya, China and U.S.A., some of them wearing the traditional costume of their country, addressed the conference in three sessions. Topics ranged from international relationships to conditions in individual countries. At the closing of the conference that evening, was a happy announcement for the Branch—the conferring of life membership upon Miss Minnie Havelaar.

The care of immigrants was to become a special work of the Branch for several years. The Canterbury Immigration Committee had received advice from the Government that a large number of immigrants was to arrive—as many as Christchurch could accommodate—and it made an urgent request to N.C.W. for assistance. A special Branch meeting was called and addressed by two of that committee, Mrs Abel and Mrs J. L. Hay. A new Branch committee was formed, 'The Care of Immigrants', with Miss H. M. Arnold as its convener. Fortunately the old 'Grace Hospital', 263 Bealey Avenue, became available for accommodation. It was a bare, empty building, but in a short time, with sympathetic co-operation of citizens of Christchurch and Lyttelton it was furnished and the committee was ready to welcome twelve married couples with their families and a few single people to a new home in what became known as 'The United Nations Hostel'. Immigrants came from Europe, some from England at first but later from Holland, Germany and the Baltic States. Still later, when it was thought that immigration needs were under control came refugees from Hungary. The committee's work continued for some time.

Other concerns of the Branch at this time were the welfare of tenants in the pensioners' cottages; accommodation for tourists at hotels in the city; for a woman J.P. to sit with the magistrate in cases involving maintenance, separation and guardianship proceedings between husband and wife; day nurseries and the running of them; violence and perverted behaviour as news items in the popular press which were accessible to children; and the lack of privacy in public hospitals. New issues which came to the fore later in the decade were fluoridation of the water supply, cervical cancer screening, and (not new) again the perennial cry for equal pay for equal work.

With the thought for keeping members informed and to give opportunity for delegates from different organisations to get to know one another better the Branch planned some one-day regional conferences, to discuss N.C.W. and its responsibilities in a changed and changing world. Mrs Fairweather presided over the first conference held in October 1955 when addresses were given by Mrs Cumberbeach, Dominion President, on achievements of N.C.W.s; Miss Oakley (Timaru) on N.C.W. of the present day; Mrs Warren on the importance of the home; Miss K. Scotter, principal of Kingslea School, on moral values; and Mr Grant, headmaster of Heaton Street School, on the influence of education in the contemporary world.

A later regional conference was opened by the mayoress, Mrs Macfarlane, who urged women to take an active part in the community, in Parliament, on the City Council and in local bodies. Among the speakers were some from local bodies, the Drainage Board Engineer, the City Council Architect, the Assistant Town Planner, and Dr Weststrate who spoke on 'The Place of Women in the Economic Life of the Country'. Miss Havelaar reflected as the conference closed 'And so ended a day which brought—we think, the conclusion that it is good from time to time to meet in this friendly, unofficial way, to think together, to learn new aspects of the many-sided problems brought to our councils and to feel that the old original purpose of N.C.W. still stands—to find ways by which women and children's lives can be bettered.' No further conference was held during the decade but Mrs W. Mackay gave a paper, 'The Work of Women in the Community', which so inspired members that they decided to have it published.

Two important visitors welcomed were the president of I.C.W., Dr Jeanne Eder, and Mrs Fisher, wife of the Archbishop of Canterbury. A special reception was held to honour Miss



Enright as she retired from her office as Lady Editor of The Press. She had given long, helpful service to the Branch. Miss Hilda Lovell-Smith as president attended the Royal Garden Party in 1953. A few years later N.C.W. was not invited to a reception for the Queen Mother, during her visit to Christchurch, and a letter was written expressing displeasure to the Minister of Internal Affairs.

An incident causing dissension occurred when women members of the Communist Party asked to affiliate to N.C.W. Their constitution was examined and found to be incompatible with that of N.C.W. and members voted against the granting of the request.

Luncheon lecturettes proved very popular at one stage commencing with 'The Development of Backward Industrial Areas' by Professor J. B. Condliffe, followed by 'The Green Belt in City Planning' by Miss Nancy Northcroft. W.E.A. later took over the series.

At the time when her husband became Bishop Elect Mrs Warren suggested a N.C.W. prayer.

"Almighty God, give as we pray Thee such deep concern for the welfare of all women and children that, setting aside all prejudice and distinction of race, creed and class, we may seek to serve them as Thou wouldst have us do. Give us wisdom and understanding in our councils, energy and enterprise in our labours, and unite us in a true fellowship of service."

With slight alteration to modern and inclusive wording it is the prayer which has been used by the Branch ever since.

#### Officers and Executive Members 1950-59

##### 1950

President: Miss McLean  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs Worrall, Mrs L. Armstrong, Miss H. K. Lovell-Smith, Miss Aitchison, Major Wood  
Secretary: Mrs L. Cattell  
Treasurer: Miss E. M. Guy

##### 1951

President: Miss H. K. Lovell-Smith  
Secretary: Mrs L. I. Cattell  
Treasurer: Miss E. M. Guy  
Committee: Mrs Fairweather, Mrs Aitchison, Mrs Armstrong, Mrs A. K. Warren, Miss M. V. Kennedy, Miss H. Lovell-Smith, Major Vera Wood

##### 1952

President: Miss H. K. Lovell-Smith  
Secretary: Mrs L. I. Cattell  
Treasurer: Miss Guy  
Committee: Mrs Mackay, Mrs Warren, Mrs Westrate, Mrs Averill, Mrs Coop, Mrs Johnson, Miss Higgins, Miss O'Connor

##### 1953

President: Miss H. K. Lovell-Smith  
Secretary: Mrs Cattell  
Treasurer: Miss O'Connor  
Committee: Mrs I. Coop, Mrs Mackay, Mrs Fairweather, Mrs Warren, Mrs Johnson, Miss Arnold, Miss Kennedy

##### 1954

President: Miss H. K. Lovell-Smith  
Secretary: Mrs L. Cattell  
Treasurer: Mrs L. A. Barnes  
Committee: Mrs W. E. Mackay, Mrs L. C. Averill, Mrs G. Fairweather, Mrs H. Arnold, Miss McLean, Miss Kennedy

##### 1955

President: Mrs G. W. Fairweather  
Secretary: Miss S. Lilly  
Treasurer: Mrs V. E. Baxter  
Registrar: Mrs D. R. Nicol  
Committee: Miss H. W. Arnold, Mrs Grant, Mrs R. W. Lattimore, Mrs F. L. Anderson, Miss M. V. Kennedy

##### 1956

President: Mrs G. W. Fairweather  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs F. L. Anderson, Mrs W. Mackay  
Secretary: Miss S. Lilly  
Treasurer: Mrs E. P. Giddens  
Registrar: Mrs D. R. Nicol  
Committee: Mrs W. Grant, Mrs A. K. Warren, Mrs G. M. Samson, Miss H. M. Arnold

##### 1957

President: Mrs G. W. Fairweather  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs R. A. Alston, Miss H. M. Arnold  
Secretary: Miss S. Lilly  
Treasurer: Mrs E. P. Giddens  
Registrar: Mrs L. R. Pugh  
Committee: Brigadier J. Bennett, Mrs W. Grant, Mrs G. M. Samson, Mrs A. K. Warren

##### 1958

President: Mrs G. W. Fairweather  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs W. Grant, Mrs G. M. Samson  
Secretary: Miss S. Lilly  
Treasurer: Mrs E. P. Giddens  
Registrar: Mrs L. R. Pugh  
Committee: Mrs A. K. Warren, Brigadier J. Bennett, Miss R. A. Alston, Miss H. M. Arnold

##### 1959

President: Mrs W. Grant  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs E. P. Giddens, Mrs L. Borrowes, Mrs G. M. Samson  
Secretary: Miss S. Lilly  
Treasurer: Mrs L. T. Cattell  
Registrar: Mrs L. R. Pugh  
Committee: Mrs J. Amos, Mrs F. L. Anderson, Mrs L. C. L. Averill



## Chapter 6

# *Time of Change* *1960–1974*

If the fifties were a time of consolidation the sixties and early seventies were times of change, change in the way things were done, and change in the character of the groups which joined the branch. By the sixties political parties were becoming interested in joining N.C.W. The women's section of the Citizens' Association had been members for some time. New members included the Riccarton Branch of the Labour Party, the women's section of the National party and for a short time the Maori Women's Welfare League represented by Mrs Patea of Tuahiwi.

There was also an increase in the amount of work the Branch had to undertake as the Government and other bodies realised the advantage of being able to consult such a large group of women. In the early 1970s there was renewed striving for equality. New groups formed and became affiliated—the Society for Research on Women, the National Organisation for Women, the Women's Liberation Movement, Centrepont and the Women's Civic Association. In these groups women questioned what had been achieved since women won the right to vote. It seemed to many to be very little, as if another wave of reform was needed before true equality could be achieved.

A withdrawal of note, in contrast, was that of W.C.T.U., an organization in which many leaders of the women's movement had worked in the nineties, one which had been an



*Mrs Grant invests the Mayoress of Christchurch Mrs George Manning, with the chain of office. August 1962*





*At the Christchurch Conference, 1962. Miss Lovell-Smith and Miss Havelaar.*

important force, perhaps the most important force, in the drive for women's suffrage. It had been carried on by its early leaders, Jessie Mackay, Christina Henderson (president at the age of 82) and latterly by Miss Hilda Lovell-Smith. At last it withdrew through lack of personnel.

There were some successes, Mrs Helen Garrett was not only elected to a jury, but was made its foreman. An amusing tale is told how this came about. The Canterbury Branch of the Federation of University Women had asked two well-known lawyers to come on to a panel to discuss 'Women and Jury Service'. However, a few days later Mrs Garrett, who had also been on the panel, came face to face with the same lawyers in the Court. When her name was called they appeared (they probably pretended) not to hear for they were bending down shuffling papers and Mrs Garrett was left unchallenged! Since then it has become the practice to have women on juries. They have often outnumbered the men and they have not been the hysterical females the lawyers predicted they would be!

The Canterbury Pilgrims and Early Settlers Association asked for help in getting information on pioneer women in preparation for a book, 'The History of Pioneer Women'. Miss H. Lovell-Smith agreed to do the work and was soon visiting families over the province discussing with them the lives of their mothers and grandmothers. It proved to be a time-consuming task and was probably a reason for the decision made soon afterwards to hand over to others the publication of 'New Zealand Women in Council', the official bulletin of N.C.W. since 1952. Miss Lovell-Smith and Miss Havelaar had been the bulletin editors and Mrs Cattell its business manager. At the 1960 conference editorship was passed on to the Nelson Branch and from 1962 'Women's Viewpoint' became the official N.C.W. journal.

In October 1962 Christchurch was the centre for the twenty-fifth National Conference of N.C.W. The two Christchurch Life Members, Miss Havelaar and Miss Lovell-Smith,





*Mrs Doreen Grant—National President 1962–66, Branch President 1959–62*

were hostesses for the opening welcome to the 160 delegates attending. National Council was congratulated on the acquiring of a Headquarters office in Wellington.

In August 1962 there was an enjoyable, different occasion when the Branch President, Mrs W. Grant, invested the Mayoress, Mrs G. Manning, with a chain of office, a gift from the women of Christchurch. 'I am honoured to be the first person to wear it and even more proud that it was sponsored by the National Council of Women,' said Mrs Manning. Miss Sadie Lilly, Branch Secretary, read a short account of the procuring of the chain which was designed in Sydney and manufactured in New Zealand. The chain is of gold-plated sterling silver and carries an impressive medallion bearing an adaptation of the coat of arms of the city.

The new affiliates added a new vigour to committees which did an amazing amount of work getting information, arranging discussions and talks and writing up reports on topics which reflected the changing times—the marijuana cigarettes, the All Blacks' tour of South Africa, time payment, packaging of goods, films for children, the Crimes Bill, the labelling of poisons. They brought out reports on hire purchase agreements, on radio programmes, and the old perennial—housing for the aged. They studied the effects of smoke pollution in the city, arranged a series of lectures on new approaches to the handling of crime, the treatment of offenders and some aspects of prison life, borstals and allied institutions. They looked into the question of mental health, and took part in the discussions on nuclear disarmament. It was only through study and collecting information that informed opinion could be given so study groups continued. They studied the care of the intellectually handicapped, counselling services, ways of helping unmarried mothers, the problems of drug dependency and alcoholism. They arranged a panel to discuss illegitimacy and found some disturbing information—permissiveness, lack of discipline, increased leisure and the consuming of alcohol at a young age led to an increase in the numbers of those with V.D., which often led to sterility in women. They studied the Human Rights Bill and the meaning of Human Rights in everyday society. 'It was not enough for women to demand equal rights—they must be willing and able to accept the responsibilities that went with those rights.'

There was a call by the women to look at their own council. Mrs Grant, Branch President, put some challenging questions—'Do we want improved conditions or wrongs righted; are we content to carry on forming remits or taking deputations to authority which in New Zealand is almost entirely limited to men? Has the time come to have more women in high places putting forward the women's point of view ... why have so few women been willing to accept civic responsibilities?'

Still more organisations joined the Branch—the Arthritis Society, Solo Parents, the Abortion Law Reform Society, the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child and the service clubs, Altrusa and Zonta. Many of the delegates from these organisations had very different ideas from those older affiliates. Mrs Crawford, as president in 1969, directed thoughts to these differences, expressing gratitude for the fact that, from all walks of life, however differing the points of view, the Council could 'meet as a body to exchange ideas, discuss, learn and enlarge our understanding of the meaning of the world around us—of other people's problems and even of our own.' She made a plea for the extended use of sub-committees in the study of problems of modern society. Other presidents—Mrs Grant and Mrs Ashley—stressed similar thoughts to those, as did also Mrs Samson—'A revolution





*Miss Marian Saunders*  
*President 1963-65*



*Mrs Gwen Samson*  
*President 1969-71*



*Dr Margaret Smith*  
*President 1972-74*

is taking place and we are unprepared for the rapid and continuous changes involved. The N.C.W. has much to think about in this period of accelerated change. A major effort must be made to bring into the Council all sections of society, to overhaul outmoded ideas and to learn from others in kindness and understanding. This has also been the aim of the Council, but to achieve it in the future will demand the utmost effort from us all.'

Certainly the Council tried hard to make detailed investigation before reaching conclusions. One such investigation was on homosexuality—opinions differed greatly among the affiliated societies. A sub-committee sought views from doctors, lawyers and clergymen. Panel discussions were held and a report written. Finally the sub-committee put forward a remit—'We urge that the Government receive encouragement from all women's organisations to set up a body of investigation into the incidence and treatment of homosexuality, such a body to consider homosexuality from the point of view of a physical and emotional disorder rather than a crime against society.' There were some topics where no agreement could be reached—abortion law reform and equal pay for equal work.

The Council certainly did not give up being watch-dog for the city but members also took part in social occasions. Mrs Searle, the Dominion President, was entertained; garden parties were held, usually to raise money, at the home of Mrs Fairweather in Avonhead or at Bishop's Court. A special evening function was held to honour Her Excellency, Lady Fergusson, during her stay in residence in Christchurch. Miss Saunders, the Branch President, welcomed guests to the Girl Guides' Hall, an attractive setting which was chosen again later for another gala evening, for the 50th Anniversary celebration in May 1967, again with special guests—the Dominion President, Mrs Tiller; Mrs Doreen Grant, Immediate Past President; and two National Life Members, Miss Havelaar and Miss Lovell-Smith.

In 1973 the H. K. Lovell-Smith Function was established, to be held annually in September to commemorate the founders of the Branch. The Branch in 1973 lost one of its most loved members, Miss Minnie Havelaar, and just a year later another who had connections with the Branch from the earliest days, Miss Hilda Lovell-Smith. The Branch owes much to these two women.

The society, 'Friends at Court', was formed at this time to give support to women and girls alone in the Courts. The need for assistance had been apparent for some time and on



the initiative of some N.C.W. members a committee was brought together to study the matter. Under the leadership of Mrs E. M. Aitken (Pat Aitken) an organization was developed and commenced its work officially in April, 1971.

A new community service, the Citizens' Advice Bureau, was being planned in the city. The idea was not at first supported by all delegates to N.C.W., but in time opinions changed and many members since have taken part in its administration.

Some 'domestic' matters—the Branch Records Book was replaced by an Honours Book and badges were ordered for Life Members of the Branch. A bequest from the estate of the late Mrs Mackie was gratefully received and money from it assigned to the Pan Pacific group.

Dr Margaret Smith was elected president in 1973 for the last years of this period, one which began and ended with special honours for the Christchurch Branch—Mrs Doreen Grant had become National President in 1960 and Mrs Grace Hollander, at the time National Treasurer, was elected to the same position—National President—in 1974.

#### Officers and Executive Members 1960–69

##### 1960

President: Mrs W. Grant  
Secretary: Miss S. Lilly  
Treasurer: Mrs L. J. Cattell  
Registrar: Mrs L. R. Pugh  
Committee: Mrs J. Amos, Mrs G. Ashley, Mrs E. Dalmer, Mrs R. Hay, Mrs G. L. Samson, Mrs E. Giddens, Mrs Clemett

##### 1961

President: Mrs W. Grant  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs E. P. Giddens, Miss S. Rolls  
Secretary: Miss S. Lilly  
Treasurer: Mrs L. I. Cattell  
Registrar: Mrs D. G. McFadden  
Committee: Mrs J. Amos, Mrs G. J. Ashley, Mrs E. Dalmer

##### 1962

President: Mrs W. Grant  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs C. J. Ashley, Mrs W. W. Averill  
Secretary: Miss S. Lilly  
Treasurer: Mrs L. I. Cattell  
Committee: Mrs E. B. Dalmer, Mrs D. G. McFadden, Miss S. Rolls, Mrs L. O. Tyrrell, Mrs G. L. Samson, Dr M. Savage, Miss M. Saunders

##### 1963

President: Miss M. E. Saunders  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs C. J. Ashley, Mrs D. G. McFadden  
Secretary: Miss S. Lilly  
Treasurer: Miss L. I. Cattell  
Committee: Mrs Te N. Hughes, Mrs Ogden, Mrs G. L. Samson, Mrs G. Friendlander, Mrs G. W. Fairweather, Mrs H. Young

##### 1964

President: Miss M. Saunders  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs C. Ashley, Mrs Ogden  
Secretary: Miss S. Lilly  
Treasurer: Mrs L. I. Cattell  
Committee: Mrs Giddens, Mrs Ogden, Mrs Tyrell, Mrs Young, Mrs McFadden, Mrs J. Donnelly, Mrs Samson, Mrs Tipping, Mrs R. Hayman

##### 1965

President: Miss M. Saunders  
Secretary: Miss S. Lilly  
Treasurer: Mrs L. I. Cattell  
Registrar: Mrs Ogden  
Committee: Mrs C. J. Ashley, Mrs S. W. Ayres, Mrs Dalmer, Mrs Crawford, Mrs Fairweather, Mrs McFadden, Mrs Tyrell, Mrs Samson

##### 1966

President: Mrs C. J. Ashley  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs G. M. Samson, Mrs J. P. Donnelly  
Secretary: Mrs C. G. Crawford  
Treasurer: Mrs L. I. Cattell  
Committee: Mrs L. Carpinter, Mrs W. D. Jamieson, Miss S. Lilly, Mrs G. M. Martin, Miss M. Saunders, Mrs Brig. Smith, Mrs P. A. Tipping

##### 1967

President: Mrs C. J. Ashley  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs C. G. Crawford, Dr M. Smith  
Secretary: Mrs G. M. Martin  
Treasurer: Mrs G. Hollander  
Committee: Miss S. Lilly, Miss P. H. Ryan, Mrs G. M. Samson, Miss M. Saunders, Mrs Brig. Smith, Mrs P. Tipping, Miss B. Webb

##### 1968

President: Mrs C. J. Ashley  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs C. Crawford, Dr M. Smith  
Secretary: Mrs G. M. Martin  
Treasurer: Mrs G. Hollander  
Committee: Mrs J. R. Fahey, Mrs G. M. Samson, Mrs P. Tipping, Mrs Brig. Smith, Miss S. Lilly, Miss P. H. Ryan, Miss B. Webb

##### 1969

President: Mrs G. M. Samson  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs C. C. Crawford, Dr M. Smith  
Secretary: Miss P. H. Ryan  
Treasurer: Mrs G. Hollander  
Committee: Miss L. Brown, Mrs L. Carpinter, Mrs M. A. Connelly, Mrs K. Davies, Mrs J. R. Fahey, Miss S. Lilly, Mrs C. E. Stanley

#### Officers and Executive Members 1970–74

##### 1970

President: Mrs G. M. Samson  
Secretary: Miss P. H. Ryan  
Treasurer: Mrs G. Hollander  
Committee: Mrs L. Brown, Mrs L. Carpinter, Mrs M. Connelly, Mrs C. Crawford, Miss S. Lilly, Miss M. Pollock, Miss Z. Sawers, Dr M. Smith, Mrs H. Snowden



**1971**

President: Mrs G. M. Samson

Vice-Presidents: Mrs G. C. Crawford, Dr M. Smith

Secretary: Miss P. H. Ryan

Treasurer: Mrs E. Hollander/Miss M. Pollock

Committee: Mrs L. Brown, Miss M. Pollock, Mrs M. E. Snowdon, Mrs L. Carpinter, Miss Z. Sawers, Miss Lilly

**1972**

President: Dr M. Smith

Vice-Presidents: Mrs E. Aitken, Mrs F. Cameron

Secretary: Miss E. Chambers

Treasurer: Miss M. Pollock

Committee: Mrs P. Allan, Mrs D. Archer, Miss K. Bland, Mrs M. Cleland, Miss M. Pollock, Mrs N. Massey, Mrs L. Walshaw

**1973**

President: Dr M. Smith

Vice-Presidents: Mrs F. Cameron, Mrs E. M. Aitken

Secretary: Miss E. C. Chambers

Treasurer: Miss M. Pollock

Committee: Mrs P. Allan, Mrs D. Archer, Miss K. Bland, Mrs McClelland, Mrs N. Pollock, Mrs N. Massey, Mrs L. Walshaw

**1974**

President: Dr M. Smith

Vice-Presidents: Mrs F. Cameron, Mrs E. M. Aitken

Secretary: Miss E. C. Chambers

Treasurer: Miss M. Pollock

Committee: Mrs N. Massey, Mrs P. Allan, Mrs K. Archer, Miss K. Bland, Mrs M. Cleland, Mrs L. Walshaw



*Mrs Grace Hollander  
National President, 1974-77  
Canterbury Branch Treasurer 1967-71  
Photo: The Christchurch Press*



## Chapter 7

# *The United Nations Decade for Women 1975–1984*

The United Nations declared 1975 to be International Women's Year and early in the year the Council made plans to observe the year appropriately. It was decided to begin with a cathedral service and Dean Underhill of the Cathedral and several Council members planned the service. Special invitations were sent to the president and members of all affiliated organisations of N.C.W. At the beginning of the service, the Dean called on Dr Margaret Smith, the Branch President, to speak about the N.C.W. '... the National Council of Women of New Zealand,' she said 'is the co-ordinating body of women's organizations. At present there are thirty-four branches throughout New Zealand and the Christchurch Branch has fifty affiliated organizations, most of them attending tonight ...'. Lessons were read by members, the first by Mrs Hill of the Business and Professional Women's Club, the second by Dr Smith. The sermon was preached by Miss Molly Mullan, a lay canon of the Cathedral and Headmistress of St Margaret's College. Girls of Te Wai Pounamu College sang a hymn in Maori. So the International Year began for the Branch

To the next meeting Mrs Grace Hollander, who had just returned from an Executive meeting in Paris, brought ideas which gave impetus to the planning of Branch activities for the year. Much thought was focused on the role of women in society, for women were beginning to realize that they underestimated their own value in the home and in the community. But how were these new values to be fostered? Many younger women asked the well-worn question—what have New Zealand women gained through their vote since 1893? So women of the Combined Churches, including many N.C.W. members, staged an exhibition in the Town Hall—'Partnership in Progress'—which in tableau form portrayed progress by women in many fields since the vote had been gained.

Several years later the Regional Women's Decade Committee developed the theme of that exhibition in a book, 'Canterbury Women Since 1893', published in 1979. The book



*The Petition—20 October 1975*

*Mrs Lancela Walshaw shows the 766 ft roll which is housed in the General Assembly Library. It was borrowed for the International Women's Year Exposition in the Town Hall. Kate Sheppard who is one who first signed the petition was responsible for collecting 25,579 signatures. Each page was glued to form the hefty roll.*

*Photo: Courtesy of the Christchurch Star*





*National Council of Women Promotion in the Limes Room, Town Hall, June 1985.*



*Mrs Nan Farrant who arranged the display. President, 1984-87*

is composed of writings by Canterbury women about changes over the years. The opening chapter, 'The National Council of Women', was written by Miss Enid Chambers. Mrs Lancely Walshaw, another member, was a leading inspiration in the making of the book and it was a matter for regret that she did not live to see it published.

Earlier, before 1975 had run its course, it had become clear that one year was not long enough for responding to all the challenges presented and the International Women's Year was extended to become the U.N. Decade for Women. The Regional Women's Decade Committee began independently of N.C.W. as a special committee set up by the Mayoress, Mrs Judith Hay, to co-ordinate activities for the Women's Year throughout Canterbury. All organisations were invited to have two delegates each on the committee. For N.C.W. one of these delegates was the president, initially Dr Smith, to be followed by others until the end of the Women's Decade.

Other events following the Women's Year were the United Women's Conventions held in the main centres. The Christchurch Convention was held over the Queen's Birthday weekend in June 1977, when nearly 2,000 women found their way to the Town Hall to take part. It was a time when women of all ages, from many different backgrounds and walks of life exchanged ideas and learned about the ways of life for women other than themselves. N.C.W. members played an active part in the convention in Christchurch. Mrs Doreen Grant, a former national president, gave the keynote address, 'Women and Peace'. She concluded with these words, 'At no time in the history of the world has society been so ready to listen to the voice of women as now. Now is the time for women to think peace, to talk peace, to work towards peace. Women must make their special contribution to the world of today or there may well be no world tomorrow.'



*The Tree Planting Ceremony, 6 June 1978  
Mary McGiven (President 1981-83); Enid Chambers; Betty McLauchlan; Margaret Cleland (President 1979-1981); Freda Cameron (President 1977-79); Margaret Smith (President 1975-77); Noala Massey.*





*Margaret Cleland, Pat Aitken, Stella Casey, Allison Ballantyne, Mary McGiven, Denny Richardson. At the Auckland Conference, N.C.W., September, 1978.*

Mrs Evelyn Weir co-ordinated the N.C.W. workshop on 'Women in Peace', while many others helped to run seminars and practical projects. Altogether there were over one hundred workshops on relevant topics like family, education, health, public life, women in church and employment. To attend the Convention and to take part was indeed an exhilarating experience.

Mrs Freda Cameron succeeded Dr Smith as president in May 1975, for her the culmination of many years in N.C.W. as a delegate to the Branch. There were busy years ahead. Directly, or indirectly through activities of affiliated groups, work initiated in the Women's Year was continuing.

Members had shown concern for the welfare and the aged in the community at the Convention, so in June 1976, Mrs McGiven convened a Council survey on 'The Needs and Attitudes of the Elderly in their Own Homes'. Members thought that the elderly still living in their own homes would themselves be able to state their preference in

life style and what they would require to be able to attain it. A questionnaire was drawn up which was administered by volunteer interviewers from the organizations affiliated with the Council. The survey was given to those of 60 years of age or older, and covered the Christchurch Metropolitan area, Kaiapoi and Rangiora. The Christchurch Health Planning and Research Unit of the Health Department provided advice and assistance and completed the final report. The following year the Branch studied the Home Aid Scheme and Miss Enid Chambers prepared questions and collated the replies that came in from the affiliated organizations at the Branch.

By August 1979, with the results of both the survey and the questionnaire completed, the Branch called a public meeting firstly to launch 'The Survey of the Needs and Attitudes of the Elderly Living in their own Homes' and secondly, to encourage the implementation of the recommendations as proposed by the Department of Health's 1978 Report 51 which stressed the need for greater accessibility to Home Help Services. The President, Mrs Cleland, welcomed the Mayor and two Ministers of the Crown, Hon. F. Gill (Health) and Hon. H. Walker (Social Welfare) who each commended the Branch on its initiative. It was interesting to note that only about 50% of the need for Home Help Services was being met at that time.

Another important project which continued over several years became known as the 'Be Mobile Bus' project. In 1977 Miss Lois Martin, a patient member of the Multiple Sclerosis Society, suggested to the Branch the idea of providing a special bus service for the disabled. Enquiries were made through local papers and over four hundred replies came in from people desperately wanting some kind of transport assistance. A joint



*Be Mobile Units*





*A core group of 10 runners were joined by others. 'Women on the Move—running for equality.' 29 November 1980. Photo: Courtesy of the Christchurch Star*

committee was then set up with representatives from the City Council's Transport Board, the Co-ordinating Council for the Handicapped and N.C.W. to work towards providing a special bus able to carry wheelchairs for the disabled. The Transport Board would provide the bus and a driver, but \$10,000 was required to convert a bus. The Branch decided to take up the challenge. Mrs Gwen Samson and a special committee worked hard to raise funds and by May 1980 had achieved the target. In February the following year the 'Be Mobile Bus' was ready, was welcomed to the Square by the Mayor, who launched the service and received from the President, Mrs Margaret Cleland, the cheque from N.C.W. To a request for volunteers to assist in the service there was response from over one hundred people. Alterations had been less costly than expected and N.C.W. was able to assist later with further provision for transport: Two wheelchairs and an Envicon Unit for quadriplegics were purchased; money was given for expenses so that a physiotherapist could attend a course in Auckland on new techniques, and a donation was made to Telethon's 'Total Mobility' project to enable the disabled to travel on discount fares in Maxi Taxis. The money raised was very well spent.

During this time the Branch was busy with many other activities.

In September 1976 the National Conference met in Christchurch and as part of the programme staged a grand N.C.W. historical pageant. Co-ordinated by Mrs Margaret Cleland all 38 councils from throughout New Zealand co-operated in presenting the National Council of Women's history, the script for which had been written by Mrs Betty Holt of Auckland.

In September 1977 the Branch welcomed the Prince and Princess of Thailand. The Princess Prem Purachattra was at that time President of the International Council of





*Mrs Margaret Cleland*



*Mrs Mary McGiven*



*Sadie Lilly, who served the branch well for over thirty years as secretary, registrar and committee member.*

Women. Her visit coincided not only with the diamond jubilee of the Branch but also with the Hilda Lovell-Smith dinner, so it was decided to celebrate the three occasions together with a buffet dinner at the Town Hall. Mrs Cameron welcomed the Princess and in her after-dinner speech outlined the sixty-year history of the Branch referring particularly to Miss Lovell-Smith, an indefatigable worker who had served N.C.W. in many local and national offices over two generations. Princess Prem, acknowledged the welcome and then spoke of the work of N.C.W. as a co-ordinating body with the machinery to pass on their well-considered views and of I.C.W.'s consultative status at the United Nations enabling it to present recommendations to the international assembly. 'I.C.W. and U.N. have a common aim,' she said 'the happiness of people.'

International Women's Day, March 8 1980, was observed in the Chateau Regency's Great Hall. The President, Mrs Cleland, in welcoming the 400 women who attended, reviewed the gains made for women over the years and challenged everyone to equip themselves to deal effectively with the concerns that still remained. Guests were treated to a Fashion Parade by Mr W. Lonie who introduced garments made from a wide variety of countries. Members of a Maori Women's Cultural Group followed with poi and song and these were followed by representatives from twelve countries in their national costume, each group telling the audience something of their homeland. Mrs Grace Hollander co-ordinated the programme which ended with a dance by girls from the Cook Islands and a happy mingling of all over a cup of tea.

The business of the Branch continued. Membership was increasing with seven new affiliations in 1981, and the President and the Executive were happy to welcome the first Maori women and the first Pacific Island women to their ranks—Mrs A. Rouse and Mrs T. Lagatule. A submission was made to the committee involved in plans for the closing of Essex Hospital, requesting attention to the need for home help for young mothers if the hospital were to be closed.

Time was spent in the study of the Working Women's Charter and Mrs Stella Casey took responsibility for the difficult task of collating replies to the questionnaire.

The Branch congratulated Mrs Casey, who was elected to be N.C.W.'s first representative on the Christchurch Polytechnic Board of Governors. Thanks were expressed to Miss Sadie Lilly, an Associate Member, who had served N.C.W. loyally and printed their minutes, agendas and annual reports for over thirty years.

In 1983 N.C.W.'s crested teaspoons were on sale for the first time, and later in the same



year a small handbook was produced for all delegates, giving useful information and a brief history of the Branch.

A clear statement of interest to readers ten years later, was made on June 15, 1982, 'That the Christchurch Branch of N.C.W. strongly opposes the opening of any Casino or the introduction of Lotto in New Zealand'. Gambling and alcohol were still abhorred by many members, so when Alcohol Alert week was held in October 1982, the Branch supported this campaign by mounting a display in Merivale Mall. Captain G. Brigans made an enlarged N.C.W. logo (now used at Branch Meetings), and posters and printing of all our affiliated organizations were done by Mrs J. Parker and Mrs M. Stevenson for the display. Branch members and organizations made good use of the Alcohol Alert discussion kit.

For International Women's Day in March 1983, two Councils—Christchurch and South Canterbury—arranged a regional gathering in Ashburton. Members came from six branches—North Canterbury, Oamaru, Waimate, the West Coast, South Canterbury and Christchurch. Two special visitors addressed the meeting, the National President, Mrs Dorothea Horsman, on 'The Search for True Equality', and Mrs Laurie Salas from Wellington, on 'Women and World Peace'. Mrs Salas also told of her experiences in New York at the recent Second Special Disarmament Session.

The National Council of Women of New Zealand in 1983 asked the Government to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women. The Branch held a public meeting in the Stringleman Room to discuss the Convention. This was well attended and brought forth a very lively debate. The President, Mrs Mary McGiven, was asked to speak on 'Radio Talk Back' on the issue and to respond to a leader article in 'The Press' which challenged the need for New Zealand to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

On the 17th September 1983 the Branch celebrated at the Hilda Lovell-Smith Function, 90 years of women's suffrage in New Zealand. The evening was a festive occasion with over 100 delegates, husbands and friends present. The tables were decorated with mauve and white ribbons and candles, and of course white camellias. Mrs Heather Little of Hawarden was guest speaker for the evening, her topic being 'Pioneer Women in New Zealand'. Guests enjoyed the short skit 'Voting for the Ladies' performed with enthusiasm by members from the Zonta Clubs in Christchurch, and delegates were delighted that the author, Elsie Locke, was present to see her work performed. No festive occasion is complete without a cake. The cake with the inscription '90 Years of Votes for Women' was cut by Mrs Doreen Grant.

In 1983 and 1984 the President, Mrs McGiven, and Branch members were hosts for three special visits from Asian women. In October a small delegation of two Japanese from Saitama Prefecture was welcomed at a morning tea; and in November four government women from the International Women's Education Association of Japan met members at an afternoon tea. In March the following year the Branch enjoyed a more extensive visit, this time for two days, from four women from the All China Women's Federation. In 1982, en route to the I.C.W. Conference in Korea, delegates had visited the Federation of Kweilin, leaving a warm invitation for a group to visit New Zealand. Chinese women found it difficult because of the political situation at that time to travel abroad, so could not attend the conference. This visit was one of the first outside visits made to New Zealand. Mrs Horsman, National President, travelled with the guests and joined with Branch members in their programme consisting of visits to the National Marae and the Antarctic Wing of the Museum; a Mayoral reception; an afternoon at the Wool Research Institute and observing apple-picking techniques at Lincoln; a meeting with local Chinese women; and meeting with people involved with Family Court and Friends of Court activities. Both visitors and hosts enjoyed the opportunities for friendly sharing of interests and ideas.

An important initiative of the Branch in 1984 was the workshop 'Families First' held in May, 1984, in the Christchurch Clinical School of Medicine. All organizations and



societies affiliated with N.C.W. supported the event and important input came from leading paediatricians in the city. Bright orange stickers 'N.C.W. Supports the Family' were produced and proved popular with both children and adults. The Child and Family Committee convener, Dr Joan Chappell, helped to arrange the workshop which the J. R. McKenzie Trust supported financially. The event was most successful and led to the publication later of a book.

In June 1984 some members took part in a tree-planting ceremony on Barker's Bank, near the Madras Street bridge over the Avon. Mrs McGiven planted a kowhai tree, the last of three trees planted at different times in that reserve by presidents, Dr Margaret Smith, Mrs Freda Cameron and Mrs Mary McGiven. A plaque, provided by donations as a memorial for Mrs Pat Aitken, was placed beside the kowhai tree. The plaque reads: 'These trees were planted by Past Presidents of National Council of Women, Christchurch Branch, to commemorate the service given by its members to the city.'

Kauri 1974 Golden Totara 1978 Kowhai 1984

6.6.84'

By the end of a very busy ten years perhaps there is only one item of business left for the executive to decide—'that the Christchurch Branch of N.C.W. hold a Mini-Conference on Queen's Birthday weekend 1985, to mark the end of the U.N. Decade for Women'.

#### Officers and Executive Members 1975—84

##### 1975

President: Mrs F. Cameron  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs E. M. Aitken, Mrs M. Cleland  
Secretary: Miss E. Chambers  
Treasurer: Miss M. Pollock  
Committee: Mrs P. Allan, Mrs K. Archer, Mrs Major Beale, Miss K. Bland, Mrs R. Wood, Mrs T. Park, Mrs N. Massey, Mrs S. Rind

##### 1976

President: Mrs F. Cameron  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs E. M. Aitken, Mrs M. Cleland  
Secretary: Miss E. Chambers  
Treasurer: Mrs R. Wood  
Committee: Mrs K. Archer, Mrs P. Allan, Mrs Major Beale, Mrs M. McGiven, Mrs D. Richardson, Mrs N. Massey, Mrs S. Rind

##### 1977

President: Mrs F. Cameron  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs E. Aitken, Mrs M. Cleland  
Secretary: Mrs O. Richardson  
Treasurer: Mrs M. McGiven  
Committee: Mrs P. Allan, Mrs K. Archer, Mrs S. Rind, Miss E. Chambers, Mrs A. Elstob, Mrs N. Massey, Mrs K. Noble

##### 1978

President: Mrs M. Cleland  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs E. M. Aitken, Mrs K. Archer  
Secretary: Mrs D. Richardson  
Treasurer: Mrs M. McGiven  
Committee: Mrs A. Ballantyne, Miss E. Chambers, Mrs C. Crawford, Mrs S. Rind, Mrs J. FAMILTON, Mrs S. Casey

##### 1979

President: Mrs M. Cleland  
Vice-Presidents: Mrs K. Archer, Mrs D. Richardson  
Secretary: Mrs C. Crawford  
Treasurer: Mrs McGiven  
Committee: Mrs A. Ballantyne, Mrs S. Casey, Mrs B. Crooks, Mrs H. Dangerfield, Miss J. FAMILTON, Mrs S. Rind, Mrs A. Brailsford



## Chapter 8

# *Towards the Centenary 1985–1993*

The year 1985 began with activity in preparation for the Decade Festival, a celebration to mark the end of the Decade for Women, the 'Mini Conference' of the initial proposal in 1983. The Regional Women's Decade Committee was asked to join with N.C.W. for the Festival; Lady Hay was asked to be patron and a special committee was set up, the N.C.W. members on it being Grace Hollander as chairperson, Nan Farrant and Mary McGiven as executive members, Liz Baxendine in charge of finance and Lyn Russell as secretary. All known women's groups in Canterbury and on the West Coast were asked to take part. The festival would run over Queen's Birthday Weekend beginning with a rally in the Town Hall on Friday evening.

Interest spread through the South Island and what had started out as a small venture quickly grew. Hundreds of women attended, from Invercargill to Auckland. Mrs Hollander opened the Festival with the hope that it would be 'a joyous occasion to celebrate achievements and at the same time an educational experience to access work still to be accomplished'. Lady Hay welcomed visitors to the City and Mrs Nan Farrant, Branch President of N.C.W., welcomed all to the Festival. Greetings were brought by Mrs Ann Hercus, Minister of Women's Affairs, Mrs Miriam Dell, President of I.C.W., and Mrs Georgina Kirby, National President of the Maori Women's Welfare League. The keynote



*From left to right: A Japanese visitor, Clare Crawford, Margaret Smith, a Japanese Visitor, Joan Parr, October 1985.*





*The 1993 Executive: Christine Low, Itie Tibbe, Elva Stanton, Alison Tait, Diane Taylor, Vivienne Allan, Iris Palmer, Ruby Selby (President), Teresa Fogarty, Noeline Walker. (Absent Shirley Barry) Shirley Barry worked and presented the above banner to the Branch.*

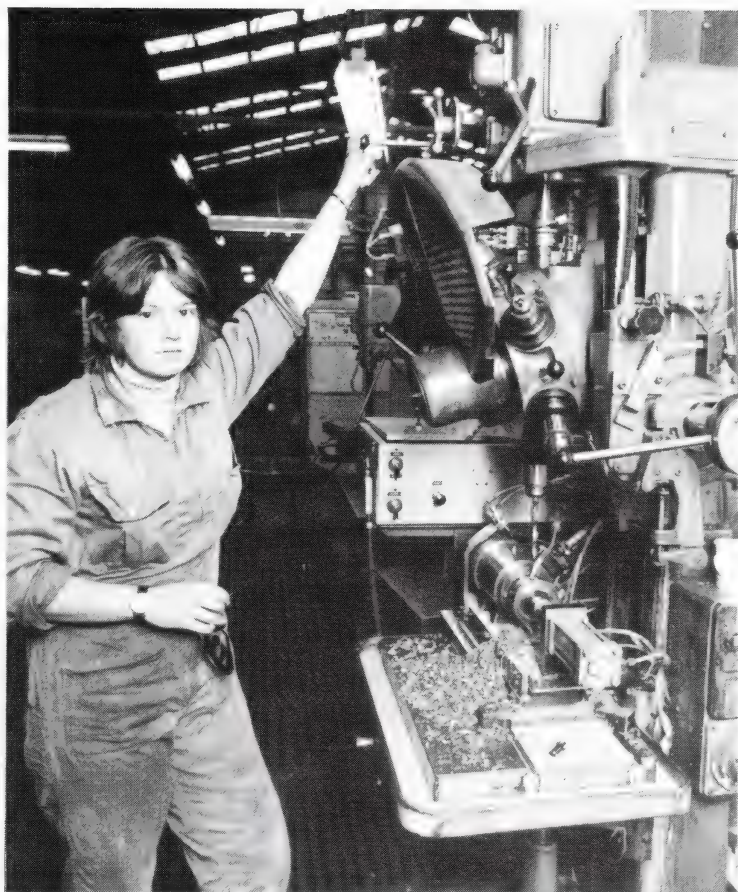
visiting speaker for the Festival was Dr Gail Radford, the Australian Director of the Equal Employment Opportunity Bureau, who gave an inspiring address. Also on the stage was Keri Hulme, who recited the poem she had composed to mark the celebration of women that evening. The next day was for workshops, over seventy of them—health and nutrition, assertiveness training, problems facing Maori and Pacific Island women, trade unions, women writers, to name a few of the topics. On Sunday there was an Inter-Faith celebration for Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Bahai women and in the afternoon a talk-back session for discussion of priorities for the future. The whole was a grand occasion where anger, dissent, apathy and wild enthusiasm were shown. A tree was planted, with a plaque beside it, in the gardens of the Takahe to commemorate the close of the Decade for Women.

1986 was a 'political' year with local body elections in mind. The Council and the Women's Electoral Lobby together organised a successful day for over fifty people who came to support women candidates in the elections. Members were delighted when two women were successful. Judy Waters was elected to the Catchment Board (the first woman on that board) and Maureen Tasker to the Drainage Board.

The Branch participated in another enterprise, 'Women on the Move', held in the Town Hall. Women's organisations were each allotted a space for a display to present the interests of their group with members at hand to give information to visitors and answer their questions.

During the year the Branch had special reason to be grateful to Lady Hay when she arranged for office space for N.C.W. in the City Council Buildings in Tuam Street. Executive members and enthusiastic helpers set up this first office, and for the next three years enjoyed the central working place with access for the public. During the same year the Branch changed its place for meetings, from Y.W.C.A. rooms to the Aged People's Welfare Centre, which had large comfortable rooms, good parking and were in a central position. Meetings have continued to be held at that centre but the office moved later to Trust Bank Community House at 187 Cashel Street. Trust Bank Canterbury and the City Council opened the house in 1990 to provide accommodation for twenty-five voluntary organizations with separate office-rooms and a downstairs meeting room where executive meetings could be held. With enthusiastic helpers again a very useful working-place was





*Women Can Do Everything—and they do. Photo: Courtesy of Christchurch Star*

and Evelyn Weir on the Media Committee and Shirley Rind on the Environment Committee. Local members shared in their interests and work. Outstanding among other matters for concern were sales of State Owned Enterprises, the environment, housing, irradiation of food and cervical cancer screening. Ruby Selby was appointed to the Women's Health Committee set up to give input into the needs of women in the new health structures.

Overseas visitors entertained during the next few years included three with special interest in women's organizations.

In May 1987, the president of I.C.W., Dr Sookja Hong of Korea, spent two days with the Branch. Dr Hong is a career diplomat and stood for presidential election in her own country (unsuccessfully). Members of the Branch appreciated her talent as an orator and followed with interest her work for the promotion of women in politics, in her words, '... unless we share political power we are unable to influence decisions'.

In September the President, Mrs Elizabeth Baxendine and members met a delegation of fourteen business women from Delhi who had been invited by the Chamber of Commerce. They brought craft work to be viewed and told of their work among local village women encouraging them in their crafts and to be self-sufficient.

Robin Walker, a well-known author and speaker, addressed the Branch some months later, on the global perspective of the International Women's Movement. Robin is from New York but at the time was a visiting scholar in feminist studies at the University of Canterbury. She stressed the need for our continuing support for women in other countries as well as our own.

Pay equity was still a goal. Branches were asked to support moves to implement the policy—equal pay for equal work. The Council again affirmed its support and in October 1988 joined with the Human Rights Commission and the Equal Opportunities Committee to hold a public meeting informing people about the concept.

established—filing cabinets, bookshelves, a typewriter and a photocopier procured and installed.

The Branch was grateful also for assistance from other quarters. Trust Bank Canterbury, the Maurice Carter Trust and the Vernon Willy Trust made generous donations to the Research Fund used by committees preparing reports, recommendations and submissions concerning Local Body and Parliamentary legislation—matters like plans for Cathedral Square, Waimakariri water pollution, strategic planning for Mental Health Services for women and the introduction of Area Health Boards.

The 1980s were years of many changes. Several Christchurch members worked on important National N.C.W. Standing Committees—Nan Farrant as convener of the Health Committee, Mary McGiven on the Social Welfare Committee, Iris Palmer on the Habitat Committee





*At the launching of the Heritage Collection of Stamps, Miss Ruth Richardson, M.P.; Ms Amanda Cropp, representing media women; Mrs Clarice Smith, W.C.T.U. and Mrs Ruby Selby, Branch President.*

Concern for local affairs included direction into some special fields. Improvement in conditions in the Women's Prison was an urgent matter and the Branch encouraged the setting up of a basic survival skills programme and provision of equipment so that the new gymnasium could be used. Unanimous opposition to the plan for a tower in Victoria Square led to a strong submission from the Branch against the idea, a submission which influenced the City Council's decision that a tower would not be built.

Two ongoing projects were initiated during these years—one to provide a 'Fragrant Garden' in the Botanical Gardens, and the other the making of a patchwork quilt to be a gift from New Zealand to be hung at the Centennial Conference of I.C.W. in Washington in June 1988. The idea of a quilt was suggested by Veronica Pyle who later co-ordinated the project. N.C.W. branches throughout the country each contributed a panel depicting their own regions, the Christchurch panel being sewn by Eileen Mars. After the conference the quilt was purchased by the New Zealand Embassy in Washington and now hangs in Parliament Buildings, Wellington.

A new organization, 'Women Towards 2,000' was established later in 1989, a group of Christchurch women interested in marking significant dates—1993, 1996—in the years leading to 2,000. N.C.W. was represented by several women, Grace Hollander, Mary McGiven, Robyn Hewland, Vivienne Allen, Liz Baxendine and Lady Hay. Initial funding was assisted by the Government. A Suffrage Trust Fund was established to give financial support for projects for Women's Suffrage Year 1993, the chief project being a national memorial to Kate Sheppard and the centennial of women's suffrage. Other local projects included the compiling of this history of the Christchurch Branch of N.C.W. and competitions in essay, speech and drama for young people, on the theme 'Changes in the Experiences of Women from 1893 to 1993'.





*Suffrage Day 1989. The President Mrs Elizabeth Baxendine presents a bunch of white camellias to the Mayoress, Lady Hay. Photo: The Christchurch Press.*

In the '90s much work by the Branch was related to social changes over the country because of restructuring of traditional services, especially in the fields of Health and Social Welfare. Mrs Ruby Selby, Branch President, was closely associated with Area Health Board functions and changes, and in its local achievement—in the setting up of the Cervical Screening Unit, with funding from the Department of Health. After studying 'Protection from Family Violence' by Ann Ballin the Branch submitted comments on the document to the National Executive and thence

to a Parliamentary Select Committee. Following the finding that violence in society is associated with literacy the Branch invited the Chief Film Censor to be the speaker at the Hilda Lovell-Smith function. Her valuable address included comments on the media, and the selection of material and classification of films.

During February 1993 two women from Papua New Guinea met the President while they were visiting Christchurch for a conference assembled for the U.N. Year of Indigenous Peoples. Following a request from the Ministry of External Relations, Mrs Selby arranged a two-day programme for them to visit city agencies with focus on the prevention of domestic violence—Pacific Island Evaluation Inc., Rape and Incest Survivors and Family Planning.

Treasurer: Mrs McGiven

Committee: Mrs A. Ballantyne, Mrs S. Casey, Mrs B. Crooks, Mrs H. Dangerfield, Miss J. Familton, Mrs S. Rind, Mrs A. Brailsford

#### **Officers and Executive Members 1980–1993**

##### **1980**

President: Mrs M. Cleland

Vice-Presidents: Mrs M. McGiven, Mrs D. Richardson

Secretary: Mrs E. Aitken

Treasurer: Miss H. Melville/Mrs S. Rind

Committee: Mrs K. Archer, Miss A. Boniface, Mrs S. Casey, Mrs M. Tasker, Mrs H. Dangerfield, Mrs J. Familton, Mrs N. Farrant

##### **1981**

President: Mrs M. McGiven

Vice-Presidents: Mrs N. Farrant, Mrs D. Richardson

Secretary: Mrs C. Crawford

Minutes Secretary: Mrs E. Aitken

Treasurer: Mrs S. Casey

Committee: Mrs A. Boniface, Mrs H. Dangerfield, Mrs D. Hill, Mrs A. Rouse, Mrs T. Lagatule, Mrs S. Rind, Mrs E. Weir

##### **1982**

President: Mrs M. McGiven

Vice-Presidents: Mrs N. Farrant, Mrs M. Tasker

Secretary: Mrs J. Parr

Treasurer: Mrs S. Casey/Mrs E. Baxendine

Committee: Mrs E. Baxendine, Mrs D. Hill, Miss A. Kendrew, Mrs T. Lagatule, Mrs D. Richardson, Mrs S. Rind, Mrs P. Woodley

##### **1983**

President: Mrs M. McGiven

Vice-Presidents: Mrs D. Richardson, Mrs M. Tasker

Secretary: Mrs J. Parr

Treasurer: Mrs E. Baxendine

Committee: Dr J. Chappell, Mrs N. Farrant, Mrs A. Kendrew, Mrs S. Rind, Mrs R. Selby, Mrs P. Woodley, Mrs T. Lagatule

##### **1984**

President: Mrs W. Farrant

Vice-Presidents: Mrs M. Tasker, Mrs R. Selby

Secretary: Miss L. Runnell

Treasurer: Mrs E. Baxendine

Committee: Mrs T. Lagatule, Dr J. Chappell, Mrs A. Kendrew, Miss P. Woodley, Mrs K. Noble, Mrs L. Smeaton, Mrs D. Taylor

##### **1985**

President: Mrs N. Farrant

Vice-Presidents: Mrs E. Baxendine, Mrs R. Selby

Secretary: Miss L. Russell

Treasurer: Mrs M. Tasker

Committee: Mrs P. Woodley, Mrs K. Noble, Mrs L. Smeaton, Mrs M. Stevenson, Mrs E. Weir, Miss D. Broughton



**1986**

President: Mrs N.Farrant  
 Vice-Presidents: Mrs E. Baxendine, Mrs R. Selby  
 Secretary: Mrs J. Brieseman  
 Treasurer: Mrs M. Tasker/Mrs L. Smeaton  
 Registrar: Mrs M. Stevenson  
 Committee: Mrs P. Woodley, Mrs E. Weir, Miss D. Broughton, Mrs L. Lewthwaite, Mrs J. Billings, Mrs D. Wynn-Williams

**1987**

President: Mrs E. Baxendine  
 Vice-Presidents: Mrs R. Selby, Dr R. Hewland  
 Secretary: Mrs J. Brieseman  
 Correspondence Secretary: Mrs I. Palmer  
 Treasurer: Mrs Smeaton  
 Registrar: Mrs I. Palmer  
 Committee: Mrs E. Weir, Mrs J. Billings, Mrs D. Wynn-Williams, Miss D. Broughton, Mrs A. Devonshire, Miss C. Low, Mrs V. Pyle, Mrs H. Dangerfield

**1988**

President: Mrs E. Baxendine  
 Vice-Presidents: Dr R. Hewland, Mrs W. Weir  
 Secretary: Mrs R. Selby  
 Correspondence Secretary: Mrs I. Palmer  
 Treasurer: Mrs L. Smeaton  
 Registrar: Miss G. Alexander  
 Committee: Mrs D. Broughton, Mrs T. Fogarty, Mrs M. Stevenson, Miss C. Low, Mrs V. Pyle, Mrs D. Wynn-Williams

**1989**

President: Mrs E. Baxendine  
 Vice-Presidents: Mrs E. Weir, Mrs M. Stevenson  
 Minute Secretary: Mrs R. Selby  
 Correspondence Secretary: Mrs I. Palmer  
 Treasurer: Mrs L. Smeaton  
 Committee: Dr R. Hewland, Miss D. Broughton, Mrs P. Malpress, Mrs P. Williams, Mrs D. Irwin, Mrs T. Fogarty, Mrs M. Pitman

**1990**

President: Mrs R. Selby  
 Vice-Presidents: Mrs L. Smeaton, Mrs T. Fogarty  
 Minute Secretary: Mrs E. Stanton  
 Correspondence Secretary: Miss C. Low  
 Treasurer: Mrs N. Farrant  
 Registrar: Miss G. Alexander  
 Committee: Dr D. Edwards, Mrs P. Malpress, Mrs P. Williams, Mrs W. Harvey, Mrs A. Tait, Miss C. Newman, Mrs A. Harris

**1991**

President: Mrs R. Selby  
 Vice-Presidents: Mrs T. Fogarty, Miss C. Low  
 Secretary: Mrs E. Stanton  
 Treasurer: Mrs L. Smeaton  
 Registrar: Mrs D. Taylor  
 Committee: Mrs A. Tait, Miss C. Newman, Miss P. Leeney, Mrs V. Allen, Mrs S. Graham Henderson, Mrs A. Harris, Mrs M. Frost, Mrs S. Barry

**1992**

President: Mrs R. Selby  
 Vice-Presidents: Miss C. Low, Mrs V. Allen  
 Secretary: Mrs E. Stanton  
 Treasurer: Mrs I. Tibbe  
 Registrar: Mrs D. Taylor  
 Committee: Mrs T. Fogarty, Mrs A. Tait, Mrs S. Barry, Mrs I. Palmer, Mrs N. Walker

**1993**

President: Mrs C. Low  
 Vice-President: Dr R. Hewland  
 Secretary: Mrs E. Stanton  
 Treasurer: Mrs I. Tibbe  
 Registrar: Mrs D. Taylor  
 Committee: Captain J. Overton, Miss B. Evans, Mrs T. Friel, Mrs S. Barry



## Chapter 9

# *Women's Councils—Branch, National, International*

### *First days at a Branch Council Meeting*

The purpose of a Women's Council is to promote co-operation between many and varied women's groups and to discover the subjects on which there is substantial agreement between them. It is mainly through the circulation and the study of remits from the affiliated societies to the Branch Council, and if passed to the National Council, and if passed to the International Council—that a body of opinion is built up and becomes the policy of the Branch or the National or the International Council.

To a delegate, arriving for the first time a N.C.W. meeting can be overwhelming experience for there seated are fifty to a hundred members. They come representing their own organisations, but as most of them have already worked with one another on committees and got to know each other well, the scene can be a daunting one for a newcomer. Dr Margaret Smith, who was later president of the Branch, looks back to 1960. 'In that year I became a delegate for the Canterbury Branch of the N.Z. Medical Association to the Christchurch Branch of the N.C.W. The monthly meetings were held at the Chamber of Commerce Building (opposite Noah's Hotel of today). At my first meeting I was absolutely fascinated by this august body of women who were so knowledgeable about local and national affairs, and who could stand and speak with such authority, which revealed they had studied well the matter under discussion. I really felt out of my depth. However, at my second meeting Miss Hilda Lovell-Smith came up to me as I entered the room and said, "You are new to this Council. Come and sit up front with me and I will explain the procedure to you." This was wonderful to be taken under a senior colleague's wing and a great help to me. In a few month's time a medical question came up, and I was able to give a medical opinion, so from then on I felt my attendance was possibly justified.'

### *The National Council*

Like the local council the national body works through committees. The first gathering of members nationally took place in Wellington in 1918. Since then conferences have been held regularly. Mrs Kate Sheppard (Mrs W. Lovell-Smith), Miss Christina Henderson, Mrs Henderson-Begg, Mrs T. E. Taylor, Mrs Fraer, Miss Cardale, Mrs Roberts, Miss Jamieson and Miss H. K. Lovell-Smith represented the Christchurch Branch in the twenties.

Christchurch hosted national conferences in 1922, '27, '34, '38, '40, '50, '62 and '76.

### *The National Conference, Gisborne 1984*

In 1984 the Biennial Conference held in Gisborne was quite unlike any previous national conference.

To the Christchurch delegates the welcome on the Marae was a highlight.

Those attending from the Branch were Mrs Nan Farrant, President; Mrs Ruby Selby, Vice-President; Mrs Grace Hollander, Convener of the Immigration Committee; Mrs Liz Baxendine, Branch Treasurer; Miss Lyn Russell, Branch Secretary; Mrs Aileen Kendrew, Mrs Tafunga Lagatule, Mrs Margaret Cleland, Mrs Kath Noble, Mrs Bernadette Richardson and Mrs Patricia Woodley.





*The New Zealand Quilt given to the I.C.U. in 1988.  
Photo: The Christchurch Press.*

Lady Beattie, Patron of the N.C.W. and the National President, Mrs Dorothea Horsman, were welcomed by Mr Huera Puru and Mrs Henare Ngata on behalf of the host people. Sir Henare noted there were no women on the welcoming platform, but said no doubt that in years to come even 'the most hidebound traditionalist must yield to the course of progress for we needed the resources of both sexes to chart our course for the future'. An interesting speech came from Mrs Hine Potaka from the Maori Education Foundation who had worked as a field officer for the University of Sydney promoting pre-school education among the Aboriginal people and was a past member of the Maori Women's Welfare League.

She described the philosophy which underpinned the Awhina Whanau programme, the recognition of the paramount role of parents and grandparents as the first teachers of their children and therefore their involvement in the programme, its base in Maori cultural values, the Maori language and the natural world of the people. The advent of Te Kohanga

Reo meant an exciting response of communities to the Maori language, she said.

A fine gesture which pleased the delegates was the placing of flowers on the monument to Margaret Sievright, one of the early Vice-Presidents of the National Council of Women. (Mrs Kate Sheppard's only son married Margaret Sievright's only daughter and as they lost their only child there are no direct descendants to these two women.)

It had been a fine conference, a different one and one that inspired many to return to their Branch with a greater knowledge and a better understanding of Maori women.

### *International Conferences*

Christchurch members have always been keen to attend the international conferences, but as they had to pay their own way and travelling by ship was so very slow few ever went. However, it was a great occasion if ever a member did go—farewell parties were held, telegrams of good wishes were sent to the ship and many went to the port to wave farewell.

Mrs Fraer was the first Christchurch member to attend such a conference when she went to Washington, D.C. in the mid-twenties. In 1930 Miss Hilda Lovell-Smith represented the N.Z. Council at the Conference in Vienna acting as the Dominion President's proxy. Whilst overseas Miss Lovell-Smith was the guest of Lord and Lady Aberdeen (I.C.W. President) at their home in Scotland and during the visit Lady Aberdeen gave her much valuable advice concerning the N.C.W.

In 1938 Miss Jamieson attended the Jubilee Conference in Edinburgh. What a magnificent occasion the opening ceremony was, presided over by Baroness Pol Boël. It was held in the evening in the Assembly Hall, a hall bedecked with the flags of the nations, where the real Jubilee spirit came alive. It was described in *The Scotsman* the following day.

'Few who saw it will ever forget the scene—delegates from all nations filling the body of the hall, distinguished office-bearers seated on the platform, and in the centre of them all,



in her white cap, black lace-trimmed dress and ermine wrap, "our beloved Lady Aberdeen" as the President of the Council, Baroness Pol Boël, so affectionately named her.

There was nothing lacking, on the British side, in the warmth of "the ceremonial welcome" that was extended to the visitors to Scotland's capital as voiced by Lady Ruth Balfour, before she called upon the Baroness to take the chair and this welcome was made individual when the latter called upon the leader of each national delegation to rise and receive the plaudits of the company. There was much craning of heads at this point to catch sight of this, that, and the other celebrity as she rose to her feet.

Lady Aberdeen herself seemed almost overcome by the warmth of the terms with which Baroness Pol Boël referred to her when she asked her to speak, and the company rose as their honorary president took her place at the microphone. Her message lost none of its clearness in voice or intention, and had Lady Aberdeen been in any doubt of her place in the hearts of those she called her "family of granddaughters" it must have been quickly dissolved.

The French have a genius all their own, a graciousness and courtesy that has for long endeared them to the Scottish race. In Madam Avril de Sainte-Croixan, an elegant figure in black and silver, and a self confessed octogenarian, that genius seemed last night to be personified, I wonder whether in all the scenes that have taken place in that historic hall there has been one more strangely moving than that enacted when this distinguished French woman turned to express to Lady Aberdeen something of the friendship that has grown between them during the years that they have been associated in the cause of women and of international friendship. There was that in her bearing that can captivate a Scot, and the exchange of courtesies between the two ladies to whom the Council owes so much gave a charming and homely touch to the proceedings.'

During the war the International Executive moved to Geneva and tried to carry on, but it was most difficult to do so. It lost contact with the International President when Brussels was overrun by the Germans and shortage of funds forced it to send out an appeal to all the branches throughout the world. Christchurch responded by sending all it could afford at the time, and the Branch set to work to raise other funds to send later.

The first post-war conference was held in Philadelphia in 1947, but no one from New Zealand attended. Travel was still difficult and expensive, but New Zealand was represented at the 1950, '54 and '57 conferences. A small grant of £10 each was given to the delegates from the travel fund which had been established in 1922 for such a purpose, but it did not go far. In 1963 when Mrs Doreen Grant led a four member delegation to the Washington Conference she was able to persuade the New Zealand Government to provide money annually to augment the Council's travel fund. At all subsequent I.C.W. meetings it has been possible for the New Zealand Council to be represented by its president, with her fare and accommodation paid.

Since the nineteen-sixties the Christchurch Branch has been represented at most international conferences. Mrs Grace Hollander lead the New Zealand delegation in 1976 when one of the Christchurch members, Pat Aitken, was made vice-convener of the newly combined committee on Environment and Habitat. Mrs Nan Farrant was among the New Zealand delegates at the following conferences in Korea 1982 and in London 1986.

In 1988 three Christ-church members attended the Washington Centen-nial Conference — Dr Margaret Smith, Mary McGiven and Robyn Hewland. The New Zealand Council was delighted when Mary McGiven was elected to the International Board, the first board member from Christchurch for some years.

Dr Smith writes of that conference—

'There were hundreds of delegates from all over the world, and it was most satisfying sharing experiences with these people.

'It was a very busy time over nine days and always each morning before breakfast we met in Jocelyn Fish's bedroom to discuss what each person from the New Zealand delegation





*The Delegation from the National Council of Women of New Zealand to the International Council of Women's Centennial Conference at Washington D.C. 1988.*

*Jocelyn Fish (2nd from left, front row next to Dame Miriam Dell)*

*Delegates from Christchurch are: 2nd row, second from right—Mary McGiven.*

*Front row on right, Robyn Hewland and Margaret Smith.*

would do that day and which sessions each delegate would attend.


'Positive resolutions were passed on consumer protection, irradiation of foods, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, handicapped children and Aids. A resolution was made condemning dumping of nuclear and other toxic wastes and New Zealand, Fiji and Australia joined to reaffirm a resolution condemning nuclear testing.

'An all-day seminar on ageing was one of the highlights of the conference. We heard that by the year 2000, 25% of the world's women will be over sixty, and those in good health will be a power to be reckoned with.

'There were many social occasions, with dinners in delegates' homes, and Mr Tim Francis, the New Zealand ambassador in Washington, invited all the New Zealand delegates to dinner at the Embassy. It was a wonderful occasion with delicious New Zealand crayfish and mussels and pavlova with New Zealand kiwi fruit, and Mr and Mrs Francis were so friendly and proud of our delegation. The New Zealand quilt co-ordinated by the Christchurch Branch to which fourteen branches of N.C.W. contributed was a special and elegant display at the I.C.W. Conference. This quilt was given to I.C.W. to be sold for their funds. When Mr and Mrs Francis heard about it they asked if they could see it and we were delighted that they bought it to hang in the New Zealand Embassy in Washington to record the wonderful example of art work by New Zealand women.'



# *In Conclusion*

n April 13 Founders' Day was celebrated in an Interfaith Service in the State Trinity Centre, Worcester Street. The Reverend Dr Phyllis Guthardt, the first woman in New Zealand to be accepted for the ministry, gave the address. It is quoted now, in full, as the concluding entry in our story. 'A Vision and a Dream'.

Take yourself down the road and round the corner. You'll have to go back in time 97 years and dress today in a long, heavy gown with a tight bodice and a full skirt. Follow me in one of the side doors to the Canterbury Provincial Chambers, and we'll find a corner to observe a history-making convention just beginning.

A group of women, about 14 of them, are seated round a table. They've removed their large hats and are set for some days of discussion. Miss Sherriff Bain's in the chair, as president of the Canterbury Women's Institute. Eleven different women's societies have come to join forces. Miss Jessie Mackay reads a long poem she's composed for the occasion, with some fervour. Lady Stout reads a paper about the International Council of Women she's had contact with in England.

These are women of strong character and leadership experiences in public life—in social affairs, in temperance matters, in education and the advancement of women.

The same afternoon they form themselves into a National Council of Women of New Zealand. Mrs Kate Sheppard's appointed president and other familiar names to us are made officers. Ada Wells becomes a long-serving and gifted Honorary Secretary and Miss Sherriff Bain, the Treasurer.

They set out their objects:

To unite all organised societies of women for mutual counsel and co-operation and in the attainment of justice and freedom for women and for all that makes for the good of the community and to encourage the foundation of societies of women engaged in trades, professions and social and political work ...

If you read the accounts of the next few days you'll be impressed by the breadth of their interests and the passion they showed. They were strong women and they were determined! That's quite a combination at any time. Their doings were reported in detail in the *Lyttelton Times*, along with editorials on various aspects.

It was no hole in a corner meeting. They started as they meant to go on and the world would just have to take notice. They were women with a vision and a dream. The programme circulated for that first meeting included a number of subjects which then—and now—would be 'regarded as radical in the extreme' (Betty Holt 'Women in Council').

They'd discuss the economic independence of women, marriage and divorce, a state bank and old age pensions. The 'new woman', and what her shape would be, would occupy them for years. How land and individuals would fare under socialist principles and how parliament might better serve the needs of people, would continue to interest them. Radical indeed. If you read the story of that first few decades and up till now, you'll find similar concerns.

Their forthrightness and farsightedness delights me. They wanted a guaranteed income for a woman at home running the household and bringing up children—paid, if she so wished, into her own account. Here we are nearly 100 years later and such suggestion's





*Inter Faith Service, 13 April 1993. April Spurdle, Capt Janet Overton, Ruby Selby (President), Sister Mary Hanrahan, Grace Hollander, Dr Phyllis Guthardt.*

still too bold for some. Mind you the Lyttelton Times was really upset at the idea: 'it would mean the degradation of women from the position of man's equal to that of a paid housekeeper ... (to be) paid a price for exercising the sacred function of motherhood ... threaten the very basis of society'. Some of the women, on the other hand, thought it might mean more leisure, fewer duties, and more money to be housekeeper.

The papers also reported frequently in those early years that the women were 'pleasant, well-cared for matrons' ... or 'quiet motherly-looking persons', quite unlike the 'shrieking sisterhood' male experience had been led to expect. How history repeats itself! Even a century later, many women who hold similar views, are unwilling to be called 'feminist' because of similar attacks on their appearance or opinions.

So they began, and for a decade continued. The vote had been won three years earlier but it didn't bring in the promised land. So they formed a group that would have enough brainpower and elbow grease to get their concerns heard by the politicians of the day. They refused to be concerned only with 'women's issues'. 'Every issue is a woman's issue,' said Kate Sheppard. And still it remains so.

'Equal work for unequal pay' they battled, year after year. But many of us here have served in professions and jobs even in our time, where women were somehow expected to need less pay than men for the same work. No official action was taken until 1949 by the council, but 1956 saw change. However, as we all know, women's pay in New Zealand on average is still considerably lower than men's.

And we'd have to say that their concerns about sweated labour are not things of the past. Many reports appear daily in our media of those being exploited under the Employment Contracts Act. Of course there are good and honourable employers who want the best for their staff. But there are many others, who for whatever reasons, will pay as little as they can get away with. I've worked with women of many countries over the years and heard their stories. Their view's unanimous: 'Women are always at the bottom of the pile.' I believe that's still true.

Health, of women and children, as in general, has been a continuing concern. In 1930 they raised money to set up a Chair of Obstetrics at Otago University and to provide scholarships for women students in O and G. They urged that doctors be trained as O and G specialists. They wanted doctors trained in family planning. Those matters are still at



the front of our concern, especially when we hear of dismal statistics in the death of children under 5 in this country! Where's the pride we used to have in our care of children? And can we rest easy when we know that today many of our young mothers can't afford to take themselves or their children to the doctor, or collect prescriptions.

Drink and driving first appeared in a remit in 1931—a problem still exercising us all in days of high speed and widespread use of cars.

The W.C.T.U. had from earliest days been part of the N.C.W. They wanted education in the use of alcohol, not just prohibition. And they were deeply concerned always for the effect heavy drinking by men had on their wives and children.

One reason the W.C.T.U. was so involved in the campaign to obtain votes for women was to gain more control through parliamentary action on how alcohol was sold.

The whole matter of family relationships was a continuing preoccupation. The N.C.W. urged sex education for young people, and discussion of human relationships, both at home and at school. We're still struggling.

They cared about abortion, they urged that divorce be available on the grounds of irreconcilable breakdown, instead of the double standard and undignified practices many of us can remember well.

I guess they and we never foresaw that so many of our family and friends would end up with broken marriages, and the great pain that would often be caused for all involved.

Certainly today we're aware of an even greater need to help young women and men form loving and enduring partnerships, just as we're aware of some of the huge pressures on them.

Old age pensions, the N.C.W. fought for and we're grateful for what's been achieved over the years. But we're also aware of the undermining that's going on.

It's not a matter of 'greedy oldies' as we've been called—wanting a soft ride. We grew up in a country where men and women didn't have to fear old age, nor be scorned for it. It's a matter of justice. And the women involved these 97 years, have always acted when injustices and anomalies were shown up. The quality of any State's life is revealed by how it treated its vulnerable members.

A large proportion of the women who worked for the vote and founded the N.C.W. were genuinely religious women. They still are. And their commitment is always that, in the words of Paul, 'we are members, one of another. Where one suffers we all suffer.' Where there's need or hardship we're all involved.

We're here today to celebrate those women who nearly a century ago began an organisation that would make great changes in this country. And not only those, but the women who took new initiatives—in the Depression, through two World Wars, and through succeeding decades. We celebrate women here today and meeting likewise elsewhere in New Zealand who for many years have given leadership in the N.C.W. and all the groups that are part of it. And with absolute genuineness we say thank you to them and to you.

But, I don't know about you—sometimes I get rather tired. We've worked long and hard, many of us and sometimes change seems slow. We don't march ever onwards and upwards as some of our earlier leaders hoped. Life's much more like waves ... forward a little, then a falling back.

A friend of mine who's now over 70 recently was asked to summarise her view of things for a meeting elsewhere. Among other things she said: 'As a woman of today, I feel we women have, to a certain extent, lost the drive and initiative of our foremothers of 100 years ago, for we have not yet attained equality with men ...'

She's right, of course, but it's not that easy! There's a temptation to ease off, to go soft, because we do get tired and the old habits and attitudes are so entrenched. We know it about ourselves, we know it of the men we work with and we know it of each other.

But think a little. Would you want to be living even in the days of our mothers and



grandmothers? Without birth control, with all the drudgery of housework, cooking, ironing ... with no private cheque account ... all the things we take for granted as mature women in the late 20th century?

The readings for today were chosen with care, to speak to and for women of whatever faith we follow. That splendid Psalm 8 speaks of a Creator who gave us this earth and all its creatures to love and to cherish ... who made us, man and woman in the divine likeness, to share in the care of creation and of one another. We're a divine destiny.

And the words of Jesus of Nazareth from the Sermon on the Mount are a constant challenge to the blessings of the earth. Blessed are the gentle, the merciful, the pure in heart. Blessed are those who work for justice, who make peace. And the Beatitudes end with a word to us: 'Blessed are you when people revile you and make things hard for you.'

We shared a vision and a dream. A vision of a world where every woman, every child, every man will live under a good shelter, will be able to feed themselves and their children well ... able to live without the fear of violence or abuse, and will gladly share this small planet earth with sisters and brothers of every different race and colour.

This is our vision and our dream. May God give us courage and endurance to achieve it.



*Miss Christine Low  
New President, 1993*



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Executive minutes 1937–1961

Notices of Dominion Executive meetings

Annual Reports and Balance Sheets, 1930, 1949–1965

Boxed Material:       consisting of Correspondence 1948–1958  
                              work of the sub committee  
                              cuttings from International meetings  
                              cuttings of a draft history of the National Council of Women  
                              information on Jury Service for Women

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# *Appendix 1*

## **Life Members of the Christchurch Branch**

Mrs C. M. J. Ashley  
Mrs Lorna Averill  
Mrs Freda Cameron  
Mrs L. I. Cattell  
Mrs Margaret Cleland  
Mrs Clare Crawford  
Mrs G. W. Fairweather  
Mrs A. I. Fraer  
Miss Gow  
Mrs Doreen Grant  
Miss Minnie Havelaar  
Mrs Grace Hollander  
Mrs E. Lorimer  
Miss Hilda Lovell-Smith  
Mrs W. Mackay  
Miss Mary McLean  
Mrs W. G. Roberts  
Mrs Gwen Samson  
Miss Marion Saunders  
Mrs Kate Sheppard  
Dr Margaret Smith  
Mrs T. E. Taylor  
Miss T. Tomlinson



## ***Appendix 2***

**Many Christchurch members have held positions on the National Executive**

<b>Mrs Sheppard</b>	President, 1918 Vice-President, 1919–1921 Life Member, 1921
<b>Miss C. Henderson</b>	Secretary, 1919–1921 Vice-President, 1922 Life Member, 1937
<b>Mrs A. E. Fraer</b>	Vice-President, 1923 President, 1927 Life Member, 1937
<b>Miss H. K. Lovell-Smith</b>	Secretary, 1927–29 Life Member, 1956
<b>Miss Mildren Trent</b>	President, 1937
<b>Miss Cooper</b>	Secretary, 1937
<b>Miss I. M. Jamieson</b>	Secretary, 1941
<b>Miss M. Havelaar</b>	President, 1944 Life Member, 1948
<b>Mrs W. Mackay</b>	Secretary, 1944
<b>Mrs Cattell</b>	Treasurer, 1944
<b>Mrs Doreen Grant</b>	President, 1962–1966 Life Member, 1967
<b>Mrs Lorna Averill</b>	Vice-President, 1964–1966
<b>Miss M. Saunders</b>	Vice-President, 1964–1966
<b>Mrs Ashley</b>	Vice-President, 1968
<b>Mrs Grace Hollander</b>	Treasurer, 1970–73 President, 1974–77 Life Member 1978
<b>Mrs C. Crawford</b>	Secretary, 1972–76







